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SELECTED ESSAYS OF  
HILAIRE BELLOC



# SELECTED ESSAYS OF HILAIRE BELLOC

*With an Introduction*  
*by*  
J. B. MORTON



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## INTRODUCTION

IT has long been a commonplace of literary criticism to deplore the diversity and the enormous volume of Mr. Hilaire Belloc's work, and to suggest that if he had written less, and within a narrower range of subject, he would have written better. That large, ill-educated public which is the outcome of compulsory education likes its favourites to write the same book over and over again, once a year; and in an age of specialists, many critics find difficulty in believing that a man who has done so many different things with his pen as Mr. Belloc, and at such a pace, can have done them all well. Asked once why he wrote so many books of all kinds, Mr. Belloc is said to have replied, 'Because my children are howling for pearls and caviare.' A less sophisticated explanation can be found after a study of his work. The possessor of an exceptionally well-stocked mind in a strong and healthy body, he has written about everything that engages his intellect or his emotions. His interests being manifold, and of a vigorous quality, the result has been more than a hundred books, covering almost every department of literature. To such a writer the essay is a godsend. It enables him to overflow from his books. For the essay is a short piece of prose in which the author reveals himself in relation to any subject under the sun. The driving force of a good essay, that by which it lives and moves, is the character of its author. There are a hundred kinds of essay, because it is an intensely personal form of art, but whatever his method, the essayist discloses his own character. With Montaigne or Lamb or Stevenson it is done intentionally. With Macaulay or Matthew Arnold it is done unintentionally.

Mr. Belloc's essays, whatever the subject, whatever the



treatment, whatever the mood, are every one of them stamped indelibly with the mark of a man who, delighting in debate and by temperament in sympathy with the sceptic, yet has certain iron convictions on the nature of man; whence he comes, what he is, why he is here, whither he is bound. In other words his essays, like the whole body of his writings, are the work of a militant Catholic. Having the old religion of Europe, he sees Europe from inside, and knows what the decay of that religion has meant to the ordinary man and woman of our time. Hazlitt's remark about Montaigne, that he had the courage to say as a writer what he felt as a man, can be applied to Mr. Belloc, if one substitutes 'thought' for 'felt'. The fully developed philosophy which he provides him with a fixed standard of judgement, which he never deserts. He proclaims his beliefs loudly and insistently, and he has been able to see, in his own lifetime, the effect of his combative attitude, particularly in the department of history. His influence is spreading, as one would expect, since we have before our eyes to-day the result of an almost world-wide experiment in living as though man were sufficient to himself, and had no need to acknowledge his Creator.

But though there is this stout thread running through his essays, and connecting them with one another, there is never a shadow of monotony. They go from sheer boisterous high spirits to melancholy meditation, from the formally didactic to the colloquial. Some are informative, others contemplative, yet others gaily fantastic. One will carry you with the rush of a good joke that must be shared, another will move you or uplift you, as music moves or uplifts. You meet a mind deeply interested in men and things, a mind which has digested a considerable experience of both. You find that travel and history are inseparable companions in this mind, which seeks to understand and interpret the present by a knowledge of the past. You note, as characteristics



of the author, a profound respect for tradition and a distrust of the entire modern hullabaloo about progress; a hatred of pretentiousness, hypocrisy, and priggishness; a contempt for muddled thinking; active enjoyment of living, and an insatiable appetite for discovery in travel, in reading, and in observation of his fellow men; an ardent love of the Roman foundation, of English landscape, of French energy.

The reader will also, I think, be aware of a recurrent theme in the essays, intimately connected with those certitudes which Mr. Belloc's religion has given him. It is the old theme of the poets, the brevity of human life; beauty fugitive, joy transient, friendship and even love doomed to perish. It is heard like a solemn music, now faintly, now more loudly, all along the way from Toul to Rome. It pierces through the tempestuous gaiety of the Four Men, and is, as it were, the refrain of their happiest songs. It is the last majestic word of Grizzlebeard in the street of Harting, before he is lost in the November brume. 'There is nothing at all that remains. . . .' So, in these essays, we are continually reminded that man on earth is an exile, carrying a burden. He has no true home here, but, by the grace of God, he is now and then granted some experience of beauty which is a poor foreshadowing of what he may expect hereafter. That sense of exile is the profound emotion which is always awakened in Mr. Belloc when he is among mountains, when he is sailing the sea, when he discovers a noble building or a magic phrase of poetry. It finds its perfect expression in

There is no pilotry my soul relies on,  
Whereby to catch, beneath my bended hand,  
Faint and beloved along the extreme horizon,  
That unforgotten land.

But there goes with this yearning for permanence, which can find no satisfaction, a very lively enjoyment of the good things



of this world; the companionship of men; drink and song and debate.

The two major excellences of Mr. Belloc's prose style are lucidity and vitality.

I hesitated for a moment in front of the word lucidity. It has been used, in connexion with Mr. Belloc, as often as the word versatility. Every critic has praised him for this quality, because, whatever one may think of his opinions, this gift of his is undeniable. Yet it is important to speak once more of lucidity, because it is becoming rare. It is no longer considered essential. Among young poets it is not even thought desirable. Yet if the purpose of a piece of writing is to leave the reader in no doubt of your meaning, which, in any sane society, it is, then lucidity is of the utmost importance. But what Cobbet called using the right words in the right order is not as easy as it sounds. It requires hard work and discipline. For lucid sentences are sentences built, sentences constructed, and not merely words written down. The author speaks intelligibly and without ambiguity to the reader. And this can only be done by discipline, which is self-control. The lucid writer abandons the fun of startling his reader by expanding his vocabulary to include bastard words or obscure words or equivocal words, merely to make a show. He trims and cuts and shapes his sentences, often discarding what pleases him most, for the sake of the meaning. He has made up his mind what he is trying to say. He has ordered and arranged his thoughts before ordering and arranging his words. As A. G. Macdonell wrote of Mr. Belloc: 'You may passionately disagree with what he says, you may stubbornly disbelieve what he says, but at least you know with certainty exactly what it is that he is saying.' Mr. Belloc thinks before he writes, and, having established order in his mind, often gives an effect of pouring out what he has to say, like a good talker, with complete spontaneity. Yet, so strongly



does he control the instrument of his trade that his contemptuous parentheses, his rhetorical flourishes, his unexpected apostrophes seem to fit into the pattern of the essay, instead of breaking that pattern. It is unnecessary to give examples of Mr. Belloc's lucidity. Open this book at random, and you will see why the critics have said that this power of making his meaning clear is one of his most conspicuous talents.

Vitality, or unfailing energy, is as striking a mark of Mr. Belloc's style as lucidity. It can be objected that vitality, in itself, is not necessarily a good quality in a writer. The American novelists, who have been so much admired and imitated of recent years, have vitality, but it is the uncivilized vitality of the film world, an abnormal, almost neurotic state of insensibility, with no restraint, no self-control, no sense of proportion. The vitality of which I speak is energy controlled, as the movements of an athlete are controlled. Mr. Belloc's style is the style of a man of the open air, and this quality of energy is as conspicuous in his pages of weighty exposition as in his skylarking. The young artilleryman who rode with the guns, the horseman, the sailor, the strong walker, all these helped to make this style, and to give him a command of rhythm. By a command of rhythm I mean the ability to compose the music for a passage of prose. This is something more than using the right words in the right order, which may be as simple as picking out a tune with one finger. But the man who uses the rhythms of prose as a master has a full orchestra at his call. The passage in *Danton* which begins 'So perished the French Monarchy', and that other passage in the same book, describing the death of Danton, are already secure in the treasury of English literature. But there are many other instances of his power of sustaining a noble music, 'like the mellow tones of a beautifully played 'cello', as Maurice Baring wrote of him. Several will be found in this selection, for instance, the essay called 'On Sacramental Things'.



Here is that vitality which, when it is joined with an exact use of words, gives a deceptive effect of ease, and conceals the labour of composition. Mr. Belloc's vocabulary is by no means large, but the words are carefully chosen and marshalled. By the time they have been formed into sentences and sent forward, life has been breathed into them. In the lighter essays, of course, the vitality is more obvious, but in all his work there is present the poise and grace of the athlete.

Mr. Belloc's style is unmistakable. Nobody could think that any one of these essays had been written by another hand. For there are certain recurring idiosyncracies, in addition to the more important ingredients of his style, which label the work as his. He will use contrast most effectively; a swift transition from wisdom to foolery, from uproarious fun to the pensive, the tender, the melancholy. And since one thing suggests not another, but fifty others, he will digress to his heart's content. He will delight in apostrophe, which he uses with great humour, and in those 'asides', witty or bellicose, which show an alert mind. He will insist on exact definition in a piece of serious writing, and his classical sense of proportion will forbid extravagance when he is writing with imagination and vision. His impudent gambols are well known—'It was on or about a Tuesday (I speak without boasting)',<sup>1</sup> and especially his habit of blessing or ridiculing his readers. Epigram he will use very sparingly, and alliteration, which can become a drug, more sparingly still. There are evidences of Mr. Belloc's mixed blood here and there. He understands fully that inarticulate love of England which he calls 'This music in their souls'. English poetry and English landscape move him intensely, and he responds vigorously to English humour at its best, that is, the humour of the old music-halls. Thoroughly English is his love of adventure at sea, but that far-away landfall, that secret country of ultimate

<sup>1</sup> From 'The North Sea' in *Hills and the Sea*.



repose, is surely Hy-Brasail, seen from the western shores of Ireland. Again English is his love of beer and of singing in inns, but his love of wine, and his refusal to be bamboozled by the label on the bottle, is French. And if anyone has influenced his style it is Rabelais. When he is in tearing spirits he will take great jumbles of words and bang them about ferociously, or tell a story in a certain ludicrous manner. He is French in the verbal precision of his more serious moods, French in his military temper, in his loathing of professional politicians, in the logical processes of his thought, in his sense of form, in his dislike of excess, and in his scorn of flaccidity.

Throughout his literary career Mr. Belloc, the best prose writer of our time, has been swimming against the tide. No contemporary author is more completely out of sympathy with what I have heard called, delightfully enough, 'the best contemporary thought'. Chesterton said that it is a good thing to suffer fools gladly, but a better thing to enjoy them tremendously. Mr. Belloc's tremendous enjoyment of the modern fool is unfailing. There is a good example of his merry pugnacity in the essay on 'The Higher Criticism', the German nonsense which poor Renan took so seriously.

It will be remembered to Mr. Belloc's honour that he never, through weariness, abandoned the field. Knowing that his ideas were unpopular, he went on drumming them in, for whoever would listen. He 'Never made a poorer song that he might have a heavier purse.'

To-day the essay as a literary form has passed out of favour. Mr. Robert Lynd is the only writer of great distinction still attempting to keep alive what was once one of the glories of English literature. But whether new essayists arise or not, Mr. Belloc will be read as long as men care for good prose. And in days to be, readers coming new to his work will, I think, say that here was one who saw to what chaos the breakdown of the Christian religion was leading

Europe; who persistently condemned the poisonous sham philosophy which attempted to take its place; and was the most authoritative voice of warning in those black times, when so many lost the power of reason, and fed on despair. His fame, for which, like all wise men, he cares little, will increase.

J. B. MORTON

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## On Song



SOME say that when that box was opened wherein lay ready the evils of the world (and a woman opened it) Hope flew out at last.

That is a Pagan thing to say and a hopeless one, for the true comfort that remained for men, and that embodied and gave reality to their conquering struggle against every despair, was surely Song.

If you would ask what society is imperilled of death, go to one in which song is extinguished. If you would ask in what society a permanent sickness oppresses all, and the wealthy alone are permitted to make the laws, go to one in which song is a fine art and treated with criticism and used charily, and ceases to be a human thing. But if you would discover where men are men, take for your test whether songs are always and loudly sung.

Sailors sing. They have a song for work and songs for every part of their work, and they have songs of reminiscence and of tragedy, and many farcical songs; some brutal songs, songs of repose, and songs in which is packed the desire for a distant home.

Soldiers also sing, at least in those Armies where soldiers are still soldiers. And the Line, which is the core and body of any army, is the most singing of them all. The Cavalry hardly sing, at least until they get indoors, for it would be a bumping sort of singing, and gunners cannot sing for noise, while the drivers are busy riding and leading as well. But the Line sings; and if you will consider quickly, all the great armies of the world, and consider them justly, not as the pedants do, but as men do who really feel the past, you would hear mounting from them always continual song. Those men who marched behind Caesar in his triumph sang

a song, and the words of it still remain (so I am told); the armies of Louis XIV and of Napoleon, of the Republic, and even of Algiers, made songs of their own which have passed into the great treasury of European letters. And though it is difficult to believe it, it is true, the little troops of the Parliament marching down the river made a song about Mother Bunch, coupled with the name of the Dorchester Hills; but I may be wrong. I was told it by a friend; he may have been a false friend.

They sang in the Barons' wars; they sang on the way to Lewes. They sang in that march which led men to the assault at Hastings, for it was written by those who saw the column of knights advancing to the foot of the hill that Taillefer was chosen for his great voice and rode before the host, tossing his sword into the air and catching it again by the hilt (a difficult thing to do), and singing of Charlemagne and of the vassals who had died under Roncesvalles.

Song also illuminates and strengthens and vivifies all common life, and on this account what is left of our peasantry have harvest songs, and there are songs for mowing and songs for the mid-winter rest, and there is even a song in the south of England for the gathering of honey, which song, if you have not heard it, though it is commonly known, runs thus:

Bees of bees of Paradise,  
Do the work of Jesus Christ,  
Do the work which no man can.  
God made man, and man made money,  
God made bees and bees made honey.  
God made big men to plough, to reap, and to sow,  
God made little boys to keep off the rook and the crow.

This song is sung for pleasure, and, by the way of singing it, it is made to scan.

Indeed, all men sing at their labour, or would so sing did not dead convention forbid them. You will say there are



exceptions, as lawyers, usurers, and others; but there are no exceptions to this rule where all the man is working and is working well, and is producing and is not ashamed.

Rowers sing, and their song is called a Barcarolle; and even men holding the tiller who have nothing to do but hold it tend to sing a song. And I will swear to this that I have heard stokers when they were hard pressed starting a sort of crooning chorus together, which shows that there is hope for us all.

The great Poets who are chiefly this, men capable of perfect expression (though of no more feeling than any other of their kind), are dignified by Song, much more than by any others of their forms of power. Consider that song of Du Bellay's which he translated out of the Italian, and in which he has the winnower singing as he turns the winnowing fan. That is great expression, because no man can read it without feeling that if ever he had to do the hard work of winnowing this is the song he would like to sing.

Song also is the mistress of memory, and though a scent is more powerful, a song is more general, as an instrument for the resurrection of lost things. Thus exiles who of all men on earth suffer most deeply, most permanently, and most fruitfully, are great makers of songs. The chief character in songs—that almost any man can write them, that any man at all can sing them, and that the greatest are anonymous—is never better proved than in this quality of the songs of exiles. There is a Highland song of which I have been told, written in the Celtic dialect and translated again into English by I know not whom, which, for all its unknown authorship (and I believe its authorship to be unknown) enshrines that radiantly beautiful line:

And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

The last anonymous piece of silver that was struck in

the mint of the Roman language has that same poignant quality.

*Exul quid vis canere?*

All the songs that men make (and they are powerful ones) regretting youth are songs of exile, and in a sense (it is a high and true sense) the mighty hymns are songs of exile also.

*Qui vitam sine termino  
Nobis donet in patria,*

that is the pure note of exile, and so is the

*Coheredes et sodales  
In terra viventium,*

and in this last glorious thing comes in the note of marching and of soldiers as well as the note of separation and of longing. But after all the mention of religion is in itself a proof of song, for what spell could there ever be without incantation, or what ritual could lack its chaunt?

If any man wonders why these two, Religion and Song, are connected, or thinks it impious that they should so be, let him do this: if he is an old man let him cover his face with his hand and remember at evening what occasions stand out of the long past full of a complete life, and of an acute observation and intelligence of all that was around: how many were occasions for song! There are pictures a man will remember all his life only because he watched them for a pastime, because he heard a woman singing as he watched them, and there are landscapes which remain in the mind long after other things have faded, but so remain because one went at morning with other men along the road singing a walking song. And if it is a young man who wishes to make trial of this truth, he also has his test. For he will note as the years continue how, while all other pleasures lose their value and gradation, Song remains, until at last the



notes of singing become like a sort of sacrament outside time, not subject to decay, but always nourishing men, for Song gives a permanent sense of futurity and a permanent sense of the presence of Divine things. Nor is there any pleasure which you will take away from middle age and leave it more lonely, than this pleasure of hearing Song.

It is that immortal quality in the business which makes it of a different kind from the other efforts of men. Write a good song and the tune leaps up to meet it out of nothingness. It clothes itself with tune, and once so clothed it continues on through generations, eternally young, always smiling, and always ready with strong hands for mankind. On this account every man who has written a song can be certain that he has done good; any man who has continually sung them can be certain that he has lived and has communicated life to others.

It is the best of all trades, to make songs, and the second best to sing them.

## The Relic

IT was upon an evening in Spain, but with nothing which that word evokes for us in the North—for it was merely a lessening of the light without dews, without mists, and without skies—that I came up a stony valley and saw against the random line of the plateau at its head the dome of a church. The road I travelled was but faintly marked, and was often lost and mingled with the rough boulders and the sand, and in the shallow depression of the valley there were but a few stagnant pools.

The shape of the dome was Italian, and it should have stood in an Italian landscape, drier indeed than that to which Northerners are accustomed, but still surrounded by trees, and with a distance that could render things lightly blue. Instead of that this large building stood in the complete waste which I have already described at such length, which is so appalling and so new to a European from any other province of Europe. As I approached the building I saw that there gathered round it a village, or rather a group of dependent houses; for the church was so much larger than anything in the place, and the material of which the church itself and the habitations were built was so similar, the flat old tiled roofs all mixed under the advance of darkness into so united a body, that one would have said, as was perhaps historically the truth, that the church was not built for the needs of the place, but that the borough had grown round the shrine, and had served for little save to house its servants.

When the long ascent was ended and the crest reached, where the head of the valley merged into the upper plain, I passed into the narrow first lanes. It was now quite dark. The darkness had come suddenly, and, to make all things consonant, there was no moon and there were not any stars;



clouds had risen of an even and menacing sort, and one could see no heaven. Here and there lights began to show in the houses, but most people were in the street, talking loudly from their doorsteps to each other. They watched me as I came along because I was a foreigner, and I went down till I reached the central market-place, wondering how I should tell the best place for sleep. But long before my choice could be made my thoughts were turned in another direction by finding myself at a turn of the irregular paving, right in front of a vast façade, and behind it, somewhat belittled by the great length of the church itself, the dome just showed. I had come to the very steps of the church which had accompanied my thoughts and had been a goal before me during all the last hours of the day.

In the presence of so wonderful a thing I forgot the object of my journey and the immediate care of the moment, and I went through the great doors that opened on the Place. These were carved, and by the little that lingered of the light and the glimmer of the electric light on the neighbouring wall (for there is electric light everywhere in Spain, but it is often of a red heat) I could perceive that these doors were wonderfully carved. Already at Saragossa, and several times during my walking south from thence, I had noted that what the Spaniards did had a strange affinity to the work of Flanders. The two districts differ altogether save in the human character of those who inhabit them: the one is pastoral, full of deep meadows and perpetual woods, of minerals and of coal for modern energy, of harbours and good tidal rivers for the industry of the Middle Ages; the other is a desert land, far up in the sky, with an air like a knife, and a complete absence of the creative sense in nature about one. Yet in both the creation of man runs riot; in both there is a sort of endlessness of imagination; in both every detail that man achieves in art is carefully completed and different from its neighbour; and in both there is an



exuberance of the human soul: but with this difference, that something in the Spanish temper has killed the grotesque. Both districts have been mingled in history, yet it is not the Spaniard who has invigorated the Delta of the Rhine and the high country to the south of it, nor the Walloons and the Flemings who have taught the Spaniards; but each of these highly separated peoples resembles the other when it comes to the outward expression of the soul: why, I cannot tell.

Within, there is not a complete darkness, but a series of lights showing against the silence of the blackness of the nave; and in the middle of the nave, like a great funeral thing, was the choir which these Spanish churches have preserved, an intact tradition, from the origins of the Christian Faith. Go to the earliest of the basilicas in Rome, and you will see that sacred enclosure standing in the middle of the edifice and taking up a certain proportion of the whole. We in the North, where the Faith lived uninterruptedly and, after the ninth century, with no great struggle, dwindled this feature and extended the open and popular space, keeping only the rood-screen as a hint of what had once been the Secret Mysteries and the Initiations of our origins. But here in Spain the earliest forms of Christian externals crystallized, as it were; they were thrust, like an insult or a challenge, against the Asiatic as the reconquest of the desolated province proceeded; and therefore in every Spanish church you have, side by side with the Christian riot of art, this original hierarchic and secret thing, almost shocking to a Northerner, the choir, the Coro, with high solemn walls shutting out the people from the priests and from the Mysteries as they had been shut out when the whole system was organized for defence against an inimical society around.

The silence of the place was not complete nor, as I have said, was the darkness. At the far end of the choir, behind the high altar, was the light of many candles, and there were



people murmuring or whispering, though not at prayers. There was a young priest passing me at that moment, and I said to him in Latin of the common sort that I could speak no Spanish. I asked him if he could speak to me slowly in Latin, as I was speaking to him. He answered me with this word, '*Paucissime*', which I easily understood. I then asked him very carefully, and speaking slowly, whether Benediction were about to be held—an evening rite; but as I did not know the Latin for Benediction, I called it alternately '*Benedictio*', which is English, and '*Salus*', which is French. He said twice, '*Si, si*', which, whether it were Italian or French or local, I understood by the nodding of his head; but at any rate he had not caught my meaning, for when I came behind the high altar where the candles were, and knelt there, I clearly saw that no preparations for Benediction were toward. There was not even an altar. All there was was a pair of cupboard doors, as it were, of very thickly carved wood, very heavily gilded and very old; indeed, the pattern of the carving was barbaric, and I think it must have dated from that turn of the Dark into the Middle Ages when so much of our Christian work resembled the work of savages: spirals and hideous heads, and serpents and other things.

By this I was already enormously impressed, and by a little group of people around of whom perhaps half were children, when the young priest to whom I had spoken approached and, calling a well-dressed man of the middle class who stood by and who had, I suppose, some local prominence, went up the steps with him towards these wooden doors; he fitted a key into the lock and opened them wide. The candles shone at once through thick clear glass upon a frame of jewels which flashed wonderfully, and in their midst was the head of a dead man, cut off from the body, leaning somewhat sideways, and changed in a terrible manner from the expression of living men. It was so



changed, not only by incalculable age, but also, as I presume, by the violence of his death.

To those inexperienced in the practice of such worship there might be more excuse for the novel impression which this sight suddenly produced upon me. Our race from its very beginning, nay, all the races of men, have preserved the fleshly memorials of those to whom sanctity attached, and I have seen such relics in many parts of Europe almost as commonplaces; but for some reason my emotions upon that evening were of a different kind. The length of the way (for I was miles and miles southwards over this desert waste), the ignorance of the language which surrounded me, the inhuman outline hour after hour under the glare of the sun, or in the inhospitable darkness of this hard Iberian land, the sternness of the faces, the violent richness and the magnitude of the architecture about me, and my knowledge of the trials through which the province had passed, put me in this Presence into a mood very different, I think, from that which pilgrimage is calculated to arouse; there was in it much more of awe, and even of terror; there seemed to re-arise in the presence of that distorted face the memories of active pain and of the unconquerable struggle by which this ruined land was recovered. I wondered as I looked at that face whether he had fallen in protest against the Mohammedans, or, as have so many, in a Spanish endurance of torture, martyred by Pagans in the Pacific Seas. But no history of him was given to me, nor do I now know as I write what occasion it was that made this head so great.

They said but a few prayers, all familiar to me, in the Latin tongue; then the 'Our Father' and some few others which have always been recited in the vernacular. They next intoned the *Salve Regina*. But what an intonation!

Had I not heard that chant often enough in my life to catch its meaning? I had never heard it set to such a tune! It was harsh, it was full of battle, and the supplication in it

throbbed with present and physical agony. Had I cared less for the human beings about me, so much suffering, so much national tradition of suffering would have revolted, as it did indeed appal, me. The chant came to an end, and the three gracious epithets in which it closes were full of wailing, and the children's voices were very high.

Then the priest shut the doors and locked them, and a boy came and blew the candles out one by one, and I went out into the market-place, fuller than ever of Spain.



## The Landfall

IT was in Oxford Street and upon the top of an omnibus during one of those despairing winter days, the light just gone, and an air rising which was neither vigorous nor cold, but sodden like the hearts of all around, that I fell to wondering whether there were some ultimate goal for men, and whether these adventures of ours, which grow tamer and so much tamer as the years proceed, are lost at last in a blank nothingness, or whether there are revelations and discoveries to come. This debate in the mind is very old; every man revolves it, none has affirmed a solution, though all the wisest of men have accepted a received answer from authority external to themselves. I was not on that murky evening concerned with authority, but with the old problem or rather mood of wonder upon the fate of the soul.

As I so mused to the jolting of the bus I began unconsciously to compare the keenness of early living with the satiety or weariness of later years; and so from one thing to another, I know not how, I thought of horses first, and then of summer rivers, and then of a harbour, and then of the open sea, and then of the sea at night, till this vague train took on the form of an exact picture, and my mind lived in an unforgotten day.

In my little boat, with my companion asleep in the bows, I steered at the end of darkness eastward over a warm and easy sea.

It was August: the roll was lazy, and the stars were few and distant all around, because the sky, though clear, was softened by the pleasant air of summer at its close; moreover, an arch of the sky before me was paling and the sea-breeze smelt of dawn.

My little boat went easy, as the sea was easy. There was just enough of a following wind dead west to keep her steady and to keep the boom square in its place right out a-lee, nor did she shake or swing (as boats so often will before a following wind), but went on with a purpose gently, like a young woman just grown used to her husband and her home. So she sailed, and aft we left a little bubbling wake, which in the darkness had glimmered with evanescent and magic fires, but now, as the morning broadened, could be seen to be white foam. The stars paled for an hour and then soon vanished; although the sun had not yet risen, it was day.

The line of the horizon before me was fresh and sharp, clear tops of swell showed hard against the faint blue of the lowest sky, and for some time we were thus alone together in the united and living immensity of the sea: my sleeping companion, my boat, and I. Then it was that I perceived a little northward and to the left of the rising glow a fixed appearance very far away beyond the edge of the world; it was grey and watery like a smoke, yet fixed in outline and unchanging; it did not waver but stood, and so standing confirmed its presence. It was land; and this dim but certain vision which now fixed my gaze was one of the mighty headlands of holy Ireland.

The noble hill lifted its mass upon the extreme limits of sight, almost dissolved by distance and yet clear; its summit was high and plain, and in the moment it was perceived the sea became a new thing. It was no longer void or absorbing, but became familiar water neighbourly to men; and was now that ocean, whose duty and meaning it is to stream around and guard the shores on which are founded cities and armies, families and enduring homes. The little boat sailed on, now in the mood for companions and for friends.

My companion stirred and woke; he raised himself upon his arm, and, looking forward to the left and right, at last



said, 'Land!' I told him the name of the headland. But I did not know that there lay beyond it a long and narrow bay, nor how, at the foot of this land-locked water, a group of small white houses stood, and behind it a very venerable tower.

It was not long before the sun came up out of a sea more clear and into a sky more vivid than you will see within the soundings of the Channel. It poured upon all the hills an enlivening new light quite different from the dawn, and this was especially noticeable upon the swell and the little ridges of it, which danced and shone so that one thought of music.

Meanwhile the land grew longer before us and this one headland merged into the general line, and inland heights could be seen; a little later again it first became possible to distinguish the divisions of the fields and the separate colours of rocks and of grassland and of trees. A little while later again the white thread showed all along that coast where the water broke at the meeting of the rocks and the sea; the tide was at the flood.

We had, perhaps, three miles between us and the land (where every detail now stood out quite sharp and clear) when the wind freshened suddenly and, after the boat had heeled as suddenly and run for a moment with the scuppers under, she recovered and bounded forward. It was like obedience to a call, or like the look that comes suddenly into men's eyes when they hear unexpectedly a familiar name. She lifted at it and she took the sea, for the sea began to rise.

Then there began that dance of vigour which is almost a combat, when men sail with skill and under some stress of attention and of danger. I would not take in an inch because of the pleasure of it, but she was over-canvased all the same, and I put her ever so little round for fear of a gybe, but the pleasure of it was greater than the fear, and the cordage sang, and it gave me delight to glance over my shoulder at that following rush which chases a small boat always when



she presses before a breeze and might poop her if her rider did not know his game. That which had been a long, long sail through the night with an almost silent wake and the bursting of but few bubbles, and next a steady approach before the strong and easy wind, had now become something inspired and exultant, a course which resembled a charge; and the more the sea rose the larger everything became—the boat's career, the land upon which she was determined, and our own minds, while all about us as we urged and raced for shore were the loud noises of the sea.

We ran straight for a point where could be seen the gate to the inland bay; we rounded it, and our entry completed all, for when once we had rounded the point all fell together; the wind, the heaving of the water, the sounds and the straining of the sheets. In a moment, and less than a moment, we had cut out from us the vision of the sea, a barrier of cliff and hill stood between us and the large horizon. The very lonely slopes of these western mountains rose solemn and enormous all around, and the bay on which we floated, with only just that way which remained after our sharp turning, was quite lucid and clear, like the seas by southern beaches where one can look down and see a world underneath our own. The boom swung inboard, the canvas hung in folds, and my companion forward cut loose the little anchor from its tie, the chain went rattling down, and so silent was that sacred place that one could hear an echo from the cliffs close by returning the clanking of the links; the chain ran out and slowly tautened as she fell back and rode to it. Then we let go the halyards, and when the slight creaking of the blocks had ceased there was no more noise. Everything was still.

There was the vision that returned to me.

I was in the midst of it, I was almost present, I had forgotten the streets of the treacherous and evil town, when



suddenly, I know not what, a cry, or some sharp movement near me, brought me back from such a place and day, from such an experience, such a parallel and such a security.

With that return to the common business of living the thought on which my mind had begun its travel also returned, but in spite of the mood I had so recently enjoyed my doubts were not resolved.

## On Achmet Boulee Bey ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

THERE is a book, I have a book, printed in 1806. It was compiled (rather than written) by a country clergyman, who had before him (so he tells me on the title page) these objects: 'To increase *knowledge*, to promote *virtue*, to discourage *vice*, and to furnish Topics for Innocent and Ingenious *Conversation*.'

On the 208th page I find this passage

'The Pacha Achmet Boulee Bey, Governor of Egypt, was remarkable for a great sensibility of heart. The pleasures permitted to him by law were far from satisfying him. He wanted to meet with a return of love, and had assembled, at a very considerable expense, a numerous seraglio, in hopes of meeting a beauty not only capable of inspiring love but of feeling all its force and impulse. Not one of this disposition did he find among twelve hundred Circassian, Georgian and Greek ladies whom he had purchased at different times.'

Oh, admirable excerpt! Oh, divine anecdote! Oh, perfect theme!

What! You also, Achmet? You also, Boulee? *You* set out upon that quest, there, among the Levantines so many years ago—and with what advantages! . . . *You* also failed? . . . My soul is fired to exalt the high complaint of man. But stay. First let me savour, point by point, that complete, that inimitable, text.

This Governor of Egypt 'was remarkable for a great sensibility of heart.' More sensible than the mass of us, was he? Greater in him than in you and me, my brothers, the hunger for the answering tone, for the echo to the soul? Yes, it would seem so. A more active hunger, at least; for



it produced action, as we see further on: he did not dream, he did. He did not ache forlorn, he sought: he hunted. Hence was he 'remarkable'. All men have wasted for the home of the spirit, for the completion of their being. All, all have waited in vain for the woman that should call them by their name. But in varying degrees. *He* was at the head of the chase. For *him* it was a rage, a fury, a crusade. He did not wait, he plunged, he charged. He would discover. He put it to trial and reached the limit of effort. He is our master and our exemplar. My homage is to Achmet Boulee Bey.

'The pleasures permitted him by law were far from satisfying him.' There comes in the minor note. After that grand opening, after that crash upon the organ, 'remarkable'—even among lovers, still questing lovers—the tone softens to our common dream. It is the weeping of Achilles, it is the sleep of Charlemagne, it is the dog of Ulysses—it is that domestic lesser something in the hero which is common to us all. There are laws: especially laws divine. They permit us this and that—the more gratitude to them. But, oh! my friends, the things they fend away! 'Visitors are requested not to touch,' says the ordinance in the bazaar; though it also has a sign above it, 'Entry free', and the same is true of this world. You may desire—desire is put quite lavishly at your disposition. But when it comes to enjoyment, there are restrictions, little friend.

Achmet was, I take it, from his name, employment and longitude (and latitude) ( $30^{\circ} 2''$  N.,  $31^{\circ} 16''$  E.—or thereabouts—I date from Greenwich, not from Paris or the Azores) a servant of Mahound and his law, the Mahoundish law. He might drink no wine—except champagne, if you call that a wine. No liqueur except *crème de menthe*. No beer of the Franks. He might not (I understand—but this may be mere legend) exceed four wives. The pastime of divorce was open to him only under certain limitations: for



instance, he had to return the dowers. He was under the law. And though this same law gave him much to delight his soul, gardens and good food, adventure, praise and a sort of monotonous music sung through the nose, horse-back riding and camel-back riding, the dawn, the sea, the moon, and day and night, and the iron titles of the night—yet was he not satisfied. Nay, these things were *far* from satisfying him, says the text. For he desired what the law does not forbid, indeed, but also cannot give. He sought the great human converse, the plenitude, the deep embrace. Therefore did his great soul starve and weaken, and attempt recovery again if only to pursue what never yet was attained: the quarry that fails the hunter, the pearl that slips back into the sea. The law did its best. It said: 'I am for your good. I desire your happiness. Come, you may play with dolls and go a walk after lessons', but he turned away and sickened. 'He was far from satisfied.' He had heard the fairy horn. He had caught the savour of what content might be: a hint, a summons; and 'he was far from satisfied'.

'He wanted to meet with a return of love.' Only that? My word, Achmet, you were easily pleased! You desired the wealth that is beyond the world: not only did you desire it, you claimed it as a matter of course. You wondered why you had it not, you thought it your due: your rightful food—this thing unknown to all the exiled sons of Pithecanthropus, this lost serene of Eden! The simple words give it in its high simplicity. 'He wanted.' Well! We also want, and we may go on wanting.

But you did not stand halted in mere wanting, strong soldier of the Nile. You struck spurs and rode. You are a model for us here. *You* set out to conquer and to hold. Life passes while *we* seek here and there forlornly; and how many little experiments must be tried, each separate, each ending in despair, before the first hint of achievement comes to *us*. We, the lesser ones, have ourselves to thank for such



poor spoil, after such single-handed hunting! Not so you! You swept widely and at once—ranging a vast field, marching on a broad front, taking large sample of the world. Hence those masterly words, that you ‘had assembled at a very considerable expense a numerous seraglio’. What manhood and what courtesy combined; what generosity and largess, what proper care as well! You did not drive or coerce—for not thus is the unseizable attained. You did not order, no, nor wheedle; and you did not command, though you sat on the throne of a king. You did not coax or threaten, or play a pretended indifference, or protest a passionate worship. You ‘assembled’ them.

And they were ladies. Right, and right, and right again, Achmet! More than right! Twenty thousand times right! If the Thing can be found at all, there must be something of leisure perhaps and certainly of equality. Ladies for love, not women: oh! yes! No doubt at all! And so for you, my Lord, they had to be ‘Ladies’. And you ‘purchased them’. Right again! You went about it in the honourable way, with no misunderstanding, no room for false issues on either side: an honourable price was honourably paid. That, if anything, should open the door of the treasure house. You paid high, you paid well. You were at a charge. You made yourself the poorer to make yourself the richer. You proved to them as to the whole world that you held them dearly indeed—‘at a considerable expense’.

You acted with discretion and with a fine distinction. You purchased not in bulk or by contract, but neatly, carefully, ‘at different times’. You weighed each opportunity, you gauged each transaction.

Achmet, your perseverance alone should have made you the one, the satisfied of lovers. Into how many eyes you looked! How many whispering voices you gauged! The sincerity of how many protestations did you not search with the white-hot flame of your own profound and tortured



spirit! Is it she, or she? Is she here at last . . . ? Twelve hundred of them—the splendid tale, the royal regiment of many and many, and more still, the dwindling perspective of research. ‘Who knows?’ you said. ‘At last, as the feet stumble in the final excess of weariness, the fountain may be heard . . . at last.’ You deserved it beyond all men, Boulee, and as we read we expect, breathless, the climax of your surpassing endeavour, we expect to hear at the very end the low tones of the beloved voice that answers, ‘Que tu perdes ou que tu gagnes, tu les aura toujours.’ Your reward is upon you. You shall be greeted with the divine reply, ‘Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens.’

Achmet, take your ease. To one man Paradise shall be restored, and one man shall be, once in the story of the race, secure. One man shall make harbour. One man shall rest in his home.

But what is this comes at the close of all? Wind of death! I know that chill—and Achmet knew it, too. Alas! Boulee! ‘Not one of this disposition did he find.’

They were twelve hundred, come from the tenderest and the best; chosen out of all the Orient; patiently comprehended one by one; approached, protected, adored each in holy turn, ‘in hopes of meeting *one* not only capable of inspiring love but of feeling all its force and impulse’ in her own breast. . . . Mortality returns: ‘Not one of this disposition did he find.’

## The Letter

IF you ask me why it is now three weeks since I received your letter and why it is only to-day that I answer it, I must tell you the truth lest further things I may have to tell you should not be worthy of your dignity or of mine. It was because at first I dared not, then later I reasoned with myself, and so bred delay, and at last took refuge in more delay. I will offer no excuse: I will not tell you that I suffered illness, or that some accident of war had taken me away from this old house, or that I have but just returned from a journey to my hill and my view over the Plain and the great River.

Your messenger I have kept, and I have entertained him well. I looked at him a little narrowly at his first coming, thinking perhaps he might be a gentleman of yours, but I soon found that he was not such, and that he bore no disguise, but was a plain rider of your household. I put him in good quarters by the Hunting Stables. He has had nothing to do but to await my resolution, which is now at last taken, and which you receive in this.

But how shall I begin, or how express to you what not distance but a slow and bitter conclusion of the mind has done?

I shall not return to Meudon. I shall not see the woods, the summer woods turning to autumn, nor follow the hunt, nor take pleasure again in what is still the best of Europe at Versailles. And now that I have said it, you must read it so; for I am unalterably determined. Believe me, it is something much more deep than courtesy which compels me to give you my reasons for this final and irrevocable doom.

We were children together. Though we leant so lightly in our conversations of this spring upon all we knew in



common, I know your age and all your strong early experience—and you know mine. Your mother will recall that day's riding when I came back from my first leave and you were home, not, I think, for good, from the convent. A fixed domestic habit blinded her, so that she could then still see in us no more than two children; yet I was proud of my sword, and had it on, and you that day were proud of a beauty which could no longer be hidden even from yourself; I would then have sacrificed, and would now, all I had or was or have or am to have made that beauty immortal.

I say, you remember that day's riding, and how after it the world was changed for you and me, and how that same evening the elders saw that it was changed.

You will remember that for two years we were not allowed to meet again. When the two years were passed we met indeed by a mere accident of that rich and tedious life wherein we were both now engaged. I was returned from leave before Tournay; you had heard, I think, a false report that I had been wounded in the dreadful business at Fontenoy (which to remember even now horrifies me a little). I had heard and knew which of the great names you now bore by marriage. The next day it was your husband who rode with me to Marly. I liked him well enough. I have grown to like him better. He is an honest man, though I confess his philosophers weary me. When I say 'an honest man' I am giving the highest praise I know.

My dear, that was sixteen years ago.

You may not even now understand, so engrossing is the toilsome and excited ritual of that rich world at Versailles, how blest you are: your children are growing round you: your daughters are beginning to reveal your own beauty, and your sons will show in these next years immediately before us that temper which in you was a spirit and a height of being, and in them, men, will show as plain courage. During that long space of years your house has remained



well ordered (it was your husband's doing). His great fortune and yours have jointly increased: if I may tell you so, it is a pleasure to all who understand fitness to know that this is so, and that your lineage and his will hold so great a place in the State.

As you review those sixteen years you may, if you will—I trust you will not—recall those occasions when I saw the woods of Meudon and mixed by chance with your world, and when we renewed the rides which had ended our childhood. As for me, I have not to recall those things. They are, alas, myself, and beyond them there is nothing that I can call a memory or a being at all. Nevertheless, as I have told you, I shall not come to Meudon: I shall not hear again the delightful voices of those many friends (now in mid-life as am I) who are my equals at Versailles. I shall not see your face.

I did not take service with the Empire from any pique or folly, but from a necessity for adventure and for the refounding of my house. It might have chanced that I should marry: the land demanded an heir. My impoverishment weighed upon me like an ill deed, for all this belt of land is dependent upon the old house, which I can with such difficulty retain and from which I write to-day. I spent all those years in the service of the Empire (and even of Russia) from no uncertain temper and from no imaginary quarrel. It is so common or so necessary for men and women to misjudge each other that I believe you thought me wayward, or at least unstable. If you did so you did me a wrong. Those two good seasons when we met again, and this last of but a month ago, were not accidents or fitful recoveries. They were all I possessed in my life and all that will perish with me when I die.

But now, to tell you the very core of my decision, it is this: The years that pass carry with them an increasing weight at once sombre and majestic. There are things belonging to



youth which habit continues strangely longer than the season to which they properly belong: if, when we discover them to be too prolonged and cling to their survival, why, then, we eat dust. So long as we possess the illusion and so long as the dearest things of youth maintain unchanged, in one chamber of our life at least, our twentieth year, so long all is well. But there is a cold river which we must pass in our advance towards nothingness and age. In the passage of that stream we change: and you and I have passed it. There is no more endurance in that young mood of ours than in any other human thing. One always wakes from it at last. One sees what it is. The soul sees and counts with hard eyes the price at which a continuance of such high dreams must be purchased, and the heart has a prevision of the evil that the happy cheat will work as maturity is reached by each of us, and as each of us fully takes on the burden of the world.

Therefore I must not return.

Foolishly and without thinking of real things, acting as though indeed that life of dream and of illusion were still possible to me, I yesterday cut with great care a rose, one from the many that have now grown almost wild upon the great wall overlooking the Danube. Then . . . I could not but smile to myself when I remembered how by the time that rose should have reached you every petal would be wasted and fallen in the long week's ride. There is a fixed term of life for roses also as for men. I do not cite this to you by way of parable. I have no heart for tricks of the pen to-night; but the two images came together, and you will understand. If I do not return, it is for the same reason that I could not send the rose.

## On History in Travel



I HAVE sometimes wondered whether it might not be possible to have guide-books written for the great routes of modern travel—I mean of modern pleasure-travel—which should make the whole road a piece of history; for history enlarges everything one sees, and gives a fullness to flat experience, so that one lives more than one's own life in contemplating it, and so that new landscapes are not only new for a moment, but subject to centuries of varieties in one's mind.

It is true that those who write good guide-books do put plenty of history into them, but it is sporadic history, as it were; it is not continuous or organic, and therefore it does not live. You are told of a particular town that such was its Roman name; that centuries later such a medieval contest was decided in its neighbourhood. If it is connected in some way with the military history of this country you will be given some detailed account of an action fought there, and that is particularly the case in Spain, which one leaves with the vague impression that it was created to serve as a terrain for the Peninsular War.

All knowledge of that sort interests the traveller, but it hardly remains, nor does it 'inform' in the full sense of that word. Now, to be 'informed' is the object, and the process of it is the pleasure, of learning. To give life to the history of places there must be connexion in it, and it so happens that with *our* travel to-day—especially our pleasure-travel—a connexion stands ready to the writer's hand: for we go in herds to-day along the great roads which have made Europe. It is the railways that have done this. Before they were built the network of cross-roads—already excellent in the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the



nineteenth—tempted men of leisure in every direction; towns that had something curious to show were visited as easily, whether they lay on the main roads or no. The fruit of that time you may see in the great inns which still stand, though often half deserted, in places eccentric to modern travel. It may be that this old universality of travel will return with our new ease of going wherever there is a good surface for wheels—it has in part returned—but still much the most of us go along the lines laid down fast for us by the first great expenditure upon railways, and this was invested, necessarily, along some at least of the immemorial tracks which—from long before history—were the framework of Western society.

If you are from the North and go to the Riviera—from thence on, down the coast to Rome, you go mile for mile along the central highway that bound together the Roman Empire, the road that Hadrian went and Constantine descended. York, London, Dover, Boulogne, Laon, Dijon, Lyons, Marseilles are the posts strung along it, and the same long line is the line of advance which the Creed took when Christianity came up northwards from the Mediterranean. It is the line the second advent of that influence took when St. Augustine brought it back to this island after the breakdown of the Empire. Or if you will consider that short eight hours of tearing speed which so many thousands know, the main line from London to Paris, see what a thick past there is gathered all along it. The crossing of the Darent, where stood one of the string of Canterbury palaces, and just to the left of your train the field where Edmund Ironside met the Danes, farther on Wrotham, another of the archbishops' line of houses, and on the hills above and in the plain below the sacred monoliths that the savages put up for worship before letters or buildings were known, and beyond the valley Kit's Coty House and the bare place where stood the Rood of Boxley and Aylesford, the first bridge



where the pirates first drove the British in their conquest of this country, and much farther the British camp which the Tenth Legion stormed, standing above the Stour, Canterbury, where there is fixed continuity with Rome and with the history before Rome, the little Roman bricks in St. Martin's Church, the Roman roads radiating to the ports of the Channel, and the British tracks on which they lay or which they straightened, deep under the site of the city the group of lake-dwellings when its defence was a lagoon, now meads—and, in the site of the great Central Tower, the end of the Middle Ages with which that town is crammed. Or if you reach it by the northern way, then everywhere you are following the great military road whereby for two thousand years travel has come from the Straits to London; Rochester, the armed defence of the river-crossing, the capture of whose castle twice gave an army the South of England, and all but saved Henry III against his Barons; the second bishopric of England; the garrison which stood central and sheltered the halt of forced marches from the sea upon London—and every step of the way Chaucer.

If you cross by Boulogne you see above you, on the last of English land, the hill forts they built to overlook the broad shallow harbour of Lemanus, now dry; you cross upon the narrow sea the track of Caesar, who, when he first invaded, drifted here under a light breeze and with the tide for hours, coming with the transports from Boulogne and beaching at last upon the flats of Deal. Also in Boulogne that broad valley was a land-locked harbour in Caesar's day, and there he built his ships.

If you cross by Calais you come, some three miles from French land, over that good holding ground where the Armada lay at anchor on a summer evening waiting to take aboard the unconquered soldiery which was designed for the assault of England; but Howard and the flock of little English boats came up after, just thwart of Gris-nez, which



you see tall and huge to your right: they lay there at anchor out of range against the stormy sunset, and when night came drove in their fire-ships against the Spanish Fleet and broke its formation, and next day the tempest drove them up that flat coast to your left, and so on to destruction in the open sea.

Then see how the French road is full also. Here, just beyond Etaples, is the place where the two ambassadors passed in '93, neither knowing the other: the one returning, driven out of London, the other posting thither at full speed to avert war. They missed, and so war came. A little farther on to your left is a patch of wood; to your right, beyond the flats, is a broad estuary of which you may see the lighthouse towers. That wood is the wood of Crécy: through it there marched the English host on their way to victory in the rising ground beyond. The river mouth is that whence William started with his hundreds of ships on the way to Hastings: he lay gathered there with the wind in his teeth for days, until the equinox sent him a south-wester and he bowled across to Pevensey and landed there: every stretch of this road is alive with stories and things done.

The way down into Italy by Bourg is a way of armies also, though not a way of English armies, and it is a way of great influences too. Thus, if you would see the Gothic North and the Southern Renaissance first meeting, like salt water and fresh at the turn of a river-tide, get out at Bourg and drive a mile to Brou and see there the tombs of the House of Savoy. There is no sight like it in Europe, yet how few know it out of all who whirl down that line—often by night—on the way to the Alps or to Italy?

There are other roads: each tempts one to a list of wonders. The road north-eastward from Paris, every step of which is the line of the last Napoleonic struggle. The road eastward into Germany by Metz, every step of which is the history of the Revolution, or of invasion, or of

success in the field. A little station which your eyes will hardly catch as the express goes by is neighbour to the camp that Attila made before he was defeated in those plains of Champagne; another little station, the station of a hidden hamlet, is called Valmy; half an hour on, beyond Les Islettes, you see, quite close by, the forest path that Drouet took when he intercepted the flight of the King and so destroyed the French Monarchy.

All these roads are known roads, but there is one which the railway has abandoned and which is therefore half derelict; many motors rediscover it, for it has half the story of Europe strung along it—I mean the road from Paris by Tours and Poitiers to Périgueux, to Toulouse, over the High Pyrenees and on to Saragossa. No one line serves it. Across the mountains for a day and more of travel there is no line at all, but this is the road up which Islam came a thousand years ago to end us. The host got past Poitiers. Charles met them from Tours and they were destroyed. You may see the place to-day, and this is the road by which all the Frankish and Gothic invasions moved on Spain, and this is the road that Charlemagne must have taken when he first marched across the hills against the Valley of Ebro. I know of no road more holy with past wars, none more wonderful where it meets the mountains, none better made for all sorts of going—and none more deserted than it is upon the high places between France and Spain—but of this road I will write later to prove how much there may be in travel.



## On the Cathedral of Seville and 'The Misanthrope'

I WITHIN one week, experienced, felt, saw, and handled with my mind, the two chief creations of the human spirit: a marvellous piece of luck! I heard Mass in Seville Cathedral on an autumn Sunday. The Sunday alter I sat at the Français marvelling at *The Misanthrope*.

These two creations, the one in stone, the other in The Verb, are, so far as I know, the summit of our European creative power, and therefore of the world.

They praise the Giralda of Seville, the great tower outside the Cathedral, and they are right. But they are wrong when they praise it with a more or less conscious motive of crying up Islam and running down their own blood. The beauty of the Giralda is not an Islamic beauty, though Islam built the most of it. It is what it is because Europe repairs and finishes. If you doubt it you may go and look at its twin tower, the great Tower of Hassan on the Hill above Rabat. That huge brown tower at Rabat looks over the Atlantic Seas, towards its sister, the Giralda: an imperfect thing looking at a perfected thing: a thing essentially weak because not permanent, looking at a symbol of permanence: a thing destined to ruin looking at a thing destined to life. And I say in the maugre of the teeth of those with whom I disagree that the Giralda would not be the Giralda but for its Christian cap. However, there it stands, useful at least as a contrast. For if the Giralda be very beautiful (as it is), what is it compared to the Cathedral itself? *That* building can never be excelled. Our race once, in one great moment of three centuries, reached its highest level. We shall hardly return to such a summit.

The Gallic spirit had created the Gothic; the unfathomed suggestion of the perfect ogive, of the uplifted arch of sixty



degrees, had spread from Paris outward; it had built all the ring of great shrines—Chartres, Beauvais, Amiens, Rheims. It was proceeding in outer circles to Britain, and even to the Rhine and beyond, and on through the *Reconquista*, southwards, shooting up Burgos like a fire, and planting the nobility of Oviedo and Leon, when the Christian cavalry entered Seville and began the last and the noblest of all those things. What a mood of making, what an enlarging passion to produce and to form and to express, must have possessed the men who through those centuries completed that thing? It is everything from the thirteenth century to the *Reyes Catolicos*; it is everything from St. Ferdinand to Ferdinand and Isabella.

Castille rode in and made this marvellous thing. I wonder what Aragon would have done? Often, as I have gone down the banks of that torrent, which is also a god, and which gave its name to a mighty kingdom, often, as I have gone down the gorge of the Pyrenees with the Aragon tumbling at my side, I have meditated upon its spirit; broader, I think, less piercing, with more grasp, less thrust, than the chivalry to the west, than the raiders of Castille; suffused, I think, with the Catalan spirit (though they would hate to be told it), and in some way at once less solemn and yet more solid. That was Aragon.

But Aragon had no chance to spread south. It was blocked. It was Castille that rode in and made this thing the Cathedral of Seville. And in making it, Castille made the greatest monument which the race of men can boast.

There is some unexplained power in proportion which not only symbolizes, not only suggests, but actually presents that which has no proportions; the illimitable vastness—Eternity.

There is a mystery about just proportion. It has this magic about it—that it can express at once both the sublime and the merely accurate. It will suggest repose, it will



suggest a disdainful superiority to inferior things, it carries a patent of nobility always, but in rare times and places it can also effect what I have said—the vision of the eternal.

A man in the Cathedral of Seville understands the end of his being. He is, while standing there on earth, surrounded by stones and rocks of the earth, with his own body in decay and all about him in decay—he is, in the midst of all this material affair, yet in some side-manner out of it all; he is half in possession of the final truths. Nowhere else in the world, that I know of, has the illimitable fixed itself in material. Divinity is here impetrate.

It is not only proportion that does this at Seville—it is also multiplicity. It is not only that mark of true creative power—the making of something more than that you meant to make—it is also that other mark of creative power—diversity, endless breeding, burgeoning, foison, which everywhere clothes this amazing result. Seville has not (in proportion to its area, its great space) the actual number of carven things which glorify Brou, the Jewel of the House of Savoy. It has not perhaps any one statue which will match the immortal Magdalen of Brou or her cousin Katherine or the modern and (to my astonishment) German little sandstone Madonna of Treves, nor that other Madonna praying to her own self, which for a long time I believed to be the loveliest figure in the world. I mean the one over the Southern porch of Rheims (the barbaric ineptitude missed it and it still remains). But if Seville has not some one statue, it has the effect of multiplicity more greatly developed than any other building I know, and here again you will ask yourself in vain, as the creators of Seville themselves would have asked themselves in vain, how that effect arose. It is so; and there stands Seville. If you would know how silence can be full and how a supreme unity can be infinitely diverse, if you would touch all the mysteries and comprehend them as well as they can



be comprehended within the limits of our little passage through the daylight, you must see Seville. But do not go there in Holy Week.

*And The Misanthrope.*

The supreme art of words is to produce a multiple and profound effect with simplicity in construction. There is hardly in this masterpiece one phrase which is not the phrase of convention or of daily use. Where the words are not the words that men used, or the sentences the sentences they used at the Court of Louis XIV, then they are the words conventionally used in the heroic couplets of that day. And each character has a set of lines to declaim (not very much), and there is, you may say, no rhetoric, and there is, you may say, no lyric, no deliberate poignancy; one might venture a paradox and say that in *The Misanthrope* there was no 'effect', meaning no sudden, sharp, contrasted effect. This mighty comedy of Molière's represents no more than the simplest conjunction, the everyday business of a man who expects too much of mankind, who is in love and expects too much of the lady, who has a friend, a man who gives him good advice, and another friend, a woman, who herself would marry him willingly enough, and who yet advises him quietly and is more a support than a lover. There is hardly any plot—merely the discovery that the young widow for whom the Misanthrope feels such passion is a chatterbox and runs her friends down behind their backs for the sake of tattle. There is the fatuous bad versifier. There are the silly men of the world.

Such are the materials of *The Misanthrope*, common stones: and into them a man did once breathe such life that he made a thing standing quite apart from all his other creations, and something higher than anything any other had accomplished. What depths and further depths! What suggestions to the left and to the right! What infinite complexity of real



character (and just that infinite complexity of real character exists in all of us), shines through those few pages, illumines and glorifies two hours of acting on a stage!

There is perhaps no man intelligent and sensitive and having passed the age of forty who will not, as he watches the acting of *The Misanthrope*, see all that he knows of life passing before him and sounding exactly in tune with the vibrations of his own soul. There is passionate love, intense and disappointed, and there is the foil to passion; that large, that honest, that domestic thing which rare women possess, and, when they possess it, afford food, sustenance, sacrament to the life of men. There is friendship; there is the ideal sought and unattained; there is the disappointment to which all noble souls are doomed. There is all human story put into one little frame. How? No one can tell how. Molière himself could not have told how.

When those simple words, spoken quickly and in a low tone—'Morbleu! Faut-il que je vous aime?'—are heard, the man's whole self, his whole past (if he has loved fully), his security, his doubt, all of him respond. Why? I cannot tell. I only know that the great poets do it, and they themselves do not know how. It is the Muse. It is something divine. It is inspiration.

It is inspiration. That word was justly framed. It would seem that among the few consolations afforded to the miserable race of men, among the little hints of a possible coming Beatitude, the Creator has especially chosen from his storehouse this gem, this priceless gem, of poetical power. I am reminded of it when I read the foolish judgement so often repeated—that the Ancients had no landscape.

“ . . . οἱ ῥά μιν ὄρα  
θῆσους' ἐν Αἰγέης εὐρείης πλόνι δῆμῳ ”

When I read that I see what I think Flaxman saw, the sunlight on the Aegean, the Asian hills, and the fertile plain

between; I feel the warmer air. Yet is there not one word which describes these things, unless you except the common word and symbol which says that Lycia is rich. Tennyson did it too: 'And the moon was full.' So did Byron: 'The moon is up and yet it is not night.' So did Shakespeare in 'gentle and low an excellent thing in women.' So did Virgil: 'Et inania regna.' So do they all.

But Molière in *The Misanthrope* did it *all the time*. It is not single lines (though I have quoted one); it is the whole river of the thing, high in flood-tide, up to the top of its banks, broad, deep, majestic, and upon a scale to which (one would have thought) mere man could never reach.

All that!

For two hours, hearing this thing, I was quite outside the world; and the memory of it is a possession which should endure, I think, for ever; by which word I mean, even beyond the limitations of this life. But therein I may be wrong.



## The Long March    ~    ~    ~    ~    ~    ~

THE French Service, by some superstition of theirs which is probably connected with clear thinking and with decision, have perpetually in mind two things where Infantry is (or are) concerned; these two things are, marching power and carrying weight.

It is their thesis, or rather it is their general opinion, that of all things in which civilized armies may differ the power of trained endurance is the most variable, and that the elements in which this endurance is most usefully manifested are the elements of bearing a weight for long and of marching for long and far between a sleep and a sleep.

There is no Service in the world but would agree that rapidity of movement (other things being equal) is to the advantage of an army. Not even the Blue Water School (for which school armies are distant and vague things) would deny that. It is even true that most men (though by no means all) who have to do with thinking out military problems would admit that, other things again being equal, the power of carrying weight was an advantage to an army. But the French Service differs from its rivals in this, that it regards these two factors in a sort of fundamental way, testing the whole Army by them and keeping them perpetually present before the whole of that Army, so that the stupidest driver in front of the guns is worrying in a muddled way as to whether the Line have not too much to do, and the cleverest young captain on the staff is wondering whether the strain put upon a particular regiment has not been too great that day. The exercise is continual, and is made as much a part of the men's mode of thought as cricket is made a part of the mode of thought of a boy at school, or as the daily paper is made a part of the mode of



thought of a man who comes in daily from the suburbs to gamble in the City of London. And the French Service shows its permeation in the matter of these two ideas by this very characteristic test, that not only are the supporters of either element in the power of Infantry numerous and enthusiastic, but also that those (and I believe for a moment Negrier) who think these theories have been overdone recognize at the back of their minds the general importance of them; while the great neutral mass that sometimes discuss, but hardly ever think originally, take them as it were for granted in all their discussions.

It would be possible to continue for some time the exposition of this most interesting thing; it would be possible to show how this point of view was connected with the conservatism of the French mind. It would be possible and fascinating perhaps to show the relation of such theories with the mentality which is convinced upon the retention of private property and upon the subdivision of it, upon the all-importance of agriculture to a State, upon the possession at no matter what sacrifice of a vast amount of vaulted, tangible, material gold. But my business in these lines is not to argue whether the French are right or wrong in this military aspect of their philosophy, nor to show them wise or unwise in regarding even the railways of a modern State as being only supplementary to marching power, and even the vast and mobile modern methods of road carriage as being only supplementary to the knapsack, which can go across ploughed fields or climb a tree. My business is not to discuss the philosophy of the thing, though I am grievously tempted to do so, but to speak of one particular thing I saw.

I saw the beginning, the middle, and the end of it. Had I myself been in the Line such things might have been so familiar to me that they would not in the long run have stood out in my imagination, and I might not have been as



fascinated as I now am by the recollections of that strange experience.

The Infantry that was the support of our pieces (for we were Divisionary Artillery) was quartered near to us in a little village of what is called 'the Champagne Pouilleuse', that is, 'the lousy', or 'the dusty' Champagne, to distinguish it from the chalky range of the mountain of Rheims, those hot slopes whereon is grown the grape producing the most northern and the most exhilarating of wines.

In this little village were we side by side, and very far off along the horizon we had seen the night before, to the north, guns and linesmen together, the goal of our journey, which was that roll in the ground upon the summit of which the very tall spire of a famous shrine led the eye on toward the larger mass of the Cathedral. The Road was straight both upon the map and in our weary minds. It crossed the fields on which had been decided the fate of Christendom in the defeat of Attila and again in the cannonade of Valmy. Little we cared for these things. What we cared about, or rather what the fellows on foot cared about, was a distance of nearly thirty miles with fifty pound and more upon one's back.

I lay in the straw of the stable near my horses, whose names were Pacte and Basilique—Basilique was the elder one and was ridden, and Pacte was the led horse—when I heard the sound of a bugle. I was already awake, I cannot tell why, I had no duties; I strolled out from the stable into the square and watched the Line assembling. They were of all sorts and sizes in the dark morning, for the French are profoundly indifferent to making a squad look neat. Some shuffled, others ran, others affected to saunter to where the sergeant, with the roll in his hand and a lantern held above it, stood ready to call out the names. As they gathered to fall in I heard their comments, which were familiar enough, for they did not differ from the comments we also made



when any effort was required of us. They cursed all order and discipline. Some boasted that the thing was not tolerable, and that they were the men to make the system impossible. Others cunningly hinted that they would deceive the doctor and fall out, and in general it would have been conceded by any man listening to them that this march could never be accomplished.

With the usual oaths, dreadful to an intellectual ear, but to us a sort of atmosphere, they fell in, and all over the village square were other companies falling in and other sergeants holding other rolls. Then the names were called, with no trappings, in a rather low voice, and rapidly.

One man was missing, and the sergeant looked round, saw me leaning against my stable door, and told me to go for the guard; but when I had got four men from the guard the missing man had come up. He was a very little man, in a hurry; he was not punished, he was warned. Hardly had I returned and hardly had the four men of the guard (who that day of the march were Cavalry) gone back straggling when the various companies shuffled into place, formed fours, and began the marching column. No drums rolled, no bugle inspirited them. The little village was now more clearly seen under a growing light, and there were bands of colour above the distant ridge of the Argonne. It was not quite four in the morning, and there was a mist from the meadows beside the road.

They went out silently. There was a sort of step kept, but it was very loose. They sang no songs, they were a most unfortunate crowd.

We had been for two hours upon our horses, we who had started long after sunrise after our horses had been groomed and fed and watered, and treated like Christian men—for it was a saying of ours that the Republic was



kinder to a horse than to a man, because a horse cost money. We had gone, I said, two hours also along the road, trotting and walking alternately, with the interminable clatter-clank-clank of the limber and the pieces behind us, and with the occasional oath of the sergeant or the corporal when a trace went loose or when a bit of bad riding on the part of some leader checked the column of guns; we had so pounded along into the heat of the day; the sun was beginning to offend us—we were more in a sweat than our horses—when we heard a long way off upon the road before us the faint noise of a song, and soon we saw from one of those recurring summits of the arrow-like French road, the jolly fellows of the Line. They were not more than a thousand yards before us; they made a little dust as they went, and as they went their rifles swinging on the shoulder gave them a false appearance of unity—for unity they were not caring at all. Somewhat before we reached them we saw their cohesion break, they became a doubled mob upon either side of the road, and we knew that they were making the regulation halt of five minutes, which is ordered at the end of every hour; but probably their commanding officer had somewhat advanced or retarded this in order to make a coincidence with the going by of the guns.

We saw them as we approached lying in all attitudes upon either side of the road, some few munching bread from the haversack, and some few drinking from their gourds. As we came up they were compelled to rise to salute another arm upon its passage, and their faces, all their double hedge of faces, were full of insolence and of merriment, for they had recently sung and eaten, and the march had done them good—they had covered about eighteen miles.

So we went by, and when we had left them some few hundred yards we again heard faintly behind us the beginning of a new song, the tune of which was known among us as 'The Washerwoman'. It is a good marching song.



But shortly after this we heard no more, for first the noise of the horse-hoofs extinguished the singing, and later distance swallowed it up altogether.

We had come into quarters early in the afternoon, we had groomed our horses and fed them, and watered them at the chalkiest stream, we had brought them back to their stables, and the stable guard was set; those who were not on duty went off about the village, and several, of whom I was one, gathered in the house of a man whose relative in the regiment had led us thither.

He received us well, for he was a farmer in a large way; he gave us wine, bread, and eggs, and a little bacon. He said he hoped that no more troops would come into the little village that day. We told him that the Line would come, so far as we knew, but he answered that he had heard from his brother, who was mayor of the adjoining commune, that the Line were to be quartered in that neighbouring parish, that they would march through the village in which we were, and sleep in the houses about a mile ahead of us upon the road to Rheims.

While he was speaking thus we heard again, but much louder than before (for it came upon us round the corner of the village street), the noise of a marching song. They were singing at the top of their voices—they were in a sort of fury of singing.

They passed along making more dust than ever before, and anyone who had not known them would have said they were out of hand. Several were limping as they went, one or two, recognizing the gunners and the drivers, waved their hands. The rest still sang. No one had fallen out. Their arms they carried anyhow, and more than one man was carrying two rifles (probably for money), and more than one man was carrying none, and some had their rifles slung across their backs, and some tucked under their arms. So



they went forward, and again we heard their singing dwindle, but this time it continued much longer than before, and I think we heard it up to the halt, when their task was accomplished and the march was done.

They are an incredible people!

## On Unknown People



YOU will often hear it said that it is astonishing such-and-such work should be present and enduring in the world, and yet the name of its author not known; but when one considers the variety of good work and the circumstances under which it is achieved, and the variety of taste also between different times and places, one begins to understand what is at first so astonishing.

There are writers who have ascribed this frequent ignorance of ours to all sorts of heroic moods, to the self-sacrifice or the humility of a whole epoch or of particular artists: that is the least satisfactory of the reasons one could find. All men desire, if not fame, at least the one poor inalienable right of authorship, and unless one can find very good reasons indeed why a painter or a writer or a sculptor should deliberately have hidden himself one must look for some other cause.

Among such causes the first two, I think, are the multiplicity of good work, and its chance character. Not that anyone ever does very good work for once and then never again—at least, such an accident is extremely rare—but that many a man who has achieved some skill by long labour does now and then strike out a sort of spark quite individual and separate from the rest. Often you will find that a man who is remembered for but one picture or one poem is worth research. You will find that he did much more. It is to be remembered that for a long time Ronsard himself was thought to be a man of one poem.

The multiplicity of good work also and the way in which accident helps it is a cause. There are bits of architecture (and architecture is the most anonymous of all the arts) which depend for their effect to-day very largely upon



situation and the process of time, and there are a thousand corners in Europe intended merely for some utility which happen almost without deliberate design to have proved perfect: this is especially true of bridges.

Then there is this element in the anonymity of good work, that a man very often has no idea how good the work is which he has done. The anecdotes (such as that famous one of Keats) which tell us of poets desiring to destroy their work, or, at any rate, casting it aside as of little value, are not all false. We still have the letter in which Burns enclosed 'Scots wha' hae', and it is curious to note his misjudgement of the verse; and side by side with that kind of misjudgement we have men picking out for singular affection and with a full expectation of glory some piece of work of theirs to which posterity will have nothing to say. This is especially true of work recast by men in mature age. Writers and painters (sculptors luckily are restrained by the nature of their art—unless they deliberately go and break up their work with a hammer) retouch and change, in the years when they have become more critical and less creative, what they think to be the insufficient achievements of their youth: yet it is the vigour and the simplicity of their youthful work which other men often prefer to remember. On this account any number of good things remain anonymous, because the good writer or the good painter or the good sculptor was ashamed of them.

Then there is this reason for anonymity, that at times—for quite a short few years—a sort of universality of good work in one or more departments of art seems to fall upon the world or upon some district. Nowhere do you see this more strikingly than in the carvings of the first third of the sixteenth century in Northern and Central France and on the Flemish border.

Men seemed at that moment incapable of doing work that was not marvellous when they once began to express



the human figure. Sometimes their mere name remains, more often it is doubtful, sometimes it is entirely lost. More curious still, you often have for this period a mixture of names. You come across some astonishing series of reliefs in a forgotten church of a small provincial town. You know at once that it is work of the moment when the flood of the Renaissance had at last reached the old country of the Gothic. You can swear that if it were not made in the time of Francis I or Henry II it was at least made by men who could remember or had seen those times. But when you turn to the names the names are nobodies.

By far the most famous of these famous things, or at any rate the most deserving of fame, is the miracle of Brou. It is a whole world. You would say that either one transcendent genius had modelled every face and figure of those thousands (so individual are they), or that a company of inspired men differing in their traditions and upbringing from all the commonalty of mankind had done such things. When you go to the names all you find is that Coulombe out of Touraine began the job, that there was some sort of quarrel between his headman and the paymasters, that he was replaced in the most everyday manner conceivable by a Fleming, Van Boghem, and that this Fleming had to help him a better-known Swiss, one Meyt. It is the same story with nearly all this kind of work and its wonderful period. The wealth of detail at Louviers or Gisors is almost anonymous; that of the first named perhaps quite anonymous.

Who carved the wood in St. James's Church at Antwerp? I think the name is known for part of it, but no one did the whole or anything like the whole, and yet it is all one thing. Who carved the wood in St. Bertrand de Comminges? We know who paid for it, and that is all we know. And as for the wood of Rouen, we must content ourselves with the vague phrase, 'Probably Flemish artists'.

Of the Gothic statues where they were conventional,



however grand the work, one can understand that they should be anonymous, but it is curious to note the same silence where the work is strikingly and particularly individual. Among the kings at Rheims are two heads, one of St. Louis, one of his grandson. Had some one famous sculptor done these things and others, were his work known and sought after, these two heads would be as renowned as anything in Europe. As it is, they are two among hundreds that the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries scattered broadcast; each probably was the work of a different workman, and the author or authors of each remain equally unknown.

I know not whether there is more pathos or more humour or more consolation in considering this ignorance of ours with regard to the makers of good things.

It is full of parable. There is something of it in Nature. There are men who will walk all day through a June wood and come out atheists at the end of it, finding no signature thereupon; and there are others who, sailing over the sea, come back home after seeing so many things still puzzled as to their authorship. That is one parable.

Then there is this: the corrective of ambition. Since so much remains, the very names of whose authors have perished, what does it matter to you or to the world whether your name, so long as your work, survives? Who was it that carefully and cunningly fixed the sights on Gumber Corner so as to get upon a clear day his exact alinement with Pulborough and then the shoulder of Leith Hill, just to miss the two rivers and just to obtain the best going for a military road? He was some engineer or other among the thousands in the Imperial Service. He was at Chichester for some weeks and drew his pay, and then perhaps went on to London, and he was born in Africa or in Lombardy, or he was a Breton, or he was from Lusitania or from the Euphrates. He did that bit of work most certainly without any consideration

of fame, for engineers (especially when they are soldiers) are singular among artists in this matter. But he did a very wonderful thing, and the Roman Road has run there for fifteen hundred years—his creation. Someone must have hit upon that precise line and the reason for it. It is exactly right, and the thing done was as great and is to-day as satisfying as that sculpture of Brou or the two boys Murillo painted, whom you may see in the Gallery at Dulwich. But he never thought of anyone knowing his name, and no one knows it.

Then there is this last thing about anonymous work, which is also a parable and a sad one. It shows how there is no bridge between two human minds.

How often have I not come upon a corbel of stone carved into the shape of a face, and that face had upon it either horror or laughter or great sweetness or vision, and I have looked at it as I might have looked upon a living face, save that it was more wonderful than most living faces. It carried in it the soul and the mind of the man who made it. But he has been dead these hundreds of years. That corbel cannot be in communion with me, for it is of stone; it is dumb and will not speak to me, though it compels me continually to ask it questions. Its author also is dumb, for he has been dead so long, and I can know nothing about him whatsoever.

Now so it is with any two human minds, not only when they are separated by centuries and by silence, but when they have their being side by side under one roof and are companions all their years. .



Home    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪

THERE is a river called the Eure which runs between low hills often wooded, with a flat meadow floor in between. It so runs for many miles. The towns that are set upon it are for the most part small and rare, and though the river is well known by name, and though one of the chief cathedrals of Europe stands near its source, for the most part it is not visited by strangers.

In this valley one day as I was drawing a picture of the woods I found a wandering Englishman who was in the oddest way. He seemed by the slight bend at his knees and the leaning forward of his head to have no very great care how much farther he might go. He was in the clothes of an English tourist, which looked odd in such a place, as, for that matter, they do anywhere. He had upon his head a pork-pie hat which was of the same colour and texture as his clothes, a speckly brown. He carried a thick stick. He was a man over fifty years of age; his face was rather hollow and worn; his eyes were very simple and pale; he was bearded with a weak beard, and in his expression there appeared a constrained but kindly weariness. This was the man who came up to me as I was drawing my picture. I had heard him scrambling in the undergrowth of the woods just behind me.

He came out and walked to me across the few yards of meadow. The haying was over, so he did the grass no harm. He came and stood near me, irresolutely, looking vaguely up and across the valley towards the farther woods, and then gently towards what I was drawing. When he had so stood still and so looked for a moment he asked me in French the name of the great house whose roof showed above the more ordered trees beyond the river, where a



park emerged from and mixed with the forest. I told him the name of the house, whereupon he shook his head and said that he had once more come to the wrong place.

I asked him what he meant, and he told me, sitting down slowly and carefully upon the grass, this adventure:

‘First,’ said he, ‘are you always quite sure whether a thing is really there or not?’

‘I am always quite sure,’ said I; ‘I am always positive.’

He sighed, and added: ‘Could you understand how a man might feel that things were really there when they were not?’

‘Only,’ said I, ‘in some very vivid dream, and even then I think a man knows pretty well inside his own mind that he is dreaming.’ I said that it seemed to me rather like the question of the cunning of lunatics; most of them know at the bottom of their silly minds that they are cracked, as you may see by the way they plot and pretend.

‘You are not sympathetic with me,’ he said slowly, ‘but I will nevertheless tell you what I want to tell you, for it will relieve me, and it will explain to you why I have again come into this valley.’

‘Why do you say “again”?’ said I.

‘Because,’ he answered gently, ‘whenever my work gives me the opportunity I do the same thing. I go up the valley of the Seine by train from Dieppe; I get out at the station at which I got out on that day, and I walk across these low hills, hoping that I may strike just the path and just the mood—but I never do.’

‘What path and what mood?’ said I.

‘I was telling you,’ he answered patiently, ‘only you were so brutal about reality.’ And then he sighed. He put his stick across his knees as he sat there on the grass, held it with a hand on either side of his knees, and so sitting bunched up began his tale once more.

‘It was ten years ago, and I was extremely tired, for you



must know that I am a Government servant, and I find my work most wearisome. It was just this time of year that I took a week's holiday. I intended to take it in Paris, but I thought on my way, as the weather was so fine, that I would do something new and that I would walk a little way off the track. I had often wondered what country lay behind the low and steep hills on the right of the railway line.

'I had crossed the Channel by night,' he continued, a little sorry for himself, 'to save the expense. It was dawn when I reached Rouen, and there I very well remember drinking some coffee which I did not like, and eating some good bread which I did. I changed carriages at Rouen because the express did not stop at any of the little stations beyond. I took a slower train, which came immediately behind it, and stopped at most of the stations. I took my ticket rather at random for a little station between Pont de l'Arche and Mantes. I got out at that little station, and it was still early—only midway through the morning.

'I was in an odd mixture of fatigue and exhilaration: I had not slept and I would willingly have done so, but the freshness of the new day was upon me, and I have always had a very keen curiosity to see new sights and to know what lies behind the hills.

'The day was fine and already rather hot for June. I did not stop in the village near the station for more than half an hour, just the time to take some soup and a little wine; then I set out into the woods to cross over into this parallel valley. I knew that I should come to it and to the railway line that goes down it in a very few miles. I proposed when I came to that other railway line on the far side of the hills to walk quietly down it as nearly parallel to it as I could get, and at the first station to take the next train for Chartres, and then the next day to go from Chartres to Paris. That was my plan.

'The road up into the woods was one of those great



French roads which sometimes frighten me and always weary me by their length and insistence: men seem to have taken so much trouble to make them, and they make me feel as though I had to take trouble myself; I avoid them when I walk. Therefore, so soon as this great road had struck the crest of the hills and was well into the woods (cutting through them like the trench of a fortification, with the tall trees on either side) I struck out into a ride which had been cut through them many years ago and was already half overgrown, and I went along this ride for several miles.

‘It did not matter to me how I went, since my design was so simple and since any direction more or less westward would enable me to fulfil it, that is, to come down upon the valley of the Eure and to find the single railway line which leads to Chartres. The woods were very pleasant on that June noon, and once or twice I was inclined to linger in their shade and sleep an hour. But—note this clearly—I did not sleep. I remember every moment of the way, though I confess my fatigue oppressed me somewhat as the miles continued.

‘At last by the steepness of a new descent I recognized that I had crossed the watershed and was coming down into the valley of this river. The ride had dwindled to a path, and I was wondering where the path would lead me when I noticed that it was getting more orderly: there were patches of sand, and here and there a man had cut and trimmed the edges of the way. Then it became more orderly still. It was all sanded, and there were artificial bushes here and there—I mean bushes not native to the forest, until at last I was aware that my ramble had taken me into someone’s own land, and that I was in a private ground.

‘I saw no great harm in this, for a traveller, if he explains himself, will usually be excused; moreover, I had to continue, for I knew no other way, and this path led me westward



also. Only, whether because my trespassing worried me or because I felt my own dishevelment more acutely, the lack of sleep and the strain upon me increased as I pursued those last hundred yards, until I came out suddenly from behind a screen of rose-bushes upon a large lawn, and at the end of it there was a French country house with a moat round it, such as they often have, and a stone bridge over the moat.

‘The château was simple and very grand. The mouldings upon it pleased me, and it was full of peace. Upon the farther side of the lawn, so that I could hear it but not see it, a fountain was playing into a basin. By the sound it was one of those high French fountains which the people who built such houses as these two hundred years ago delighted in. The splash of it was very soothing, but I was so tired and drooping that at one moment it sounded much farther than at the next.

‘There was an iron bench at the edge of the screen of roses, and hardly knowing what I did—for it was not the right thing to do in another person’s place—I sat down on this bench, taking pleasure in the sight of the moat and the house with its noble roof, and the noise of the fountain. I think I should have gone to sleep there and at that moment—for I felt upon me worse than ever the strain of that long hot morning and that long night journey—had not a very curious thing happened.’

Here the man looked up at me oddly, as though to see whether I disbelieved him or not; but I did not disbelieve him.

I was not even very much interested, for I was trying to make the trees to look different one from the other, which is an extremely difficult thing: I had not succeeded and I was niggling away. He continued with more assurance:

‘The thing that happened was this: a young girl came out of the house dressed in white, with a blue scarf over her



head and crossed round her neck. I knew her face as well as possible: it was a face I had known all my youth and early manhood—but for the life of me I could not remember her name!

‘When one is very tired,’ I said, ‘that does happen to one: a name one knows as well as one’s own escapes one. It is especially the effect of lack of sleep.’

‘It is,’ said he, sighing profoundly; ‘but the oddness of my feeling it is impossible to describe, for there I was meeting the oldest and perhaps the dearest and certainly the most familiar of my friends, whom,’ he added, hesitating a moment, ‘I had not seen for many years. It was a very great pleasure . . . it was a sort of comfort and an ending. I forgot, the moment I saw her, why I had come over the hills, and all about how I meant to get to Chartres. . . . And now I must tell you,’ added the man a little awkwardly, ‘that my name is Peter.’

‘No doubt,’ said I gravely, for I could not see why he should not bear that name.

‘My Christian name,’ he continued hurriedly.

‘Of course,’ said I, as sympathetically as I could. He seemed relieved that I had not even smiled at it.

‘Yes,’ he went on rather quickly, ‘Peter—my name is Peter. Well, this lady came up to me and said, “Why, Peter, we never thought you would come!” She did not seem very much astonished, but rather as though I had come earlier than she had expected. “I will get Philip,” she said. “You remember Philip?” Here I had another little trouble with my memory: I did remember that there was a Philip, but I could not place him. That was odd, you know. As for her, oh, I knew *her* as well as the colour of the sky: it was her name that my brain missed, as it might have missed my own name or my mother’s.

‘Philip came out as she called him, and there was a familiarity between them that seemed natural to me at the



time, but whether he was a brother or a lover or a husband, or what, I could not for the life of me remember.

““You look tired,” he said to me in a kind voice that I liked very much and remembered clearly. “I am,” said I, “dog tired.” “Come in with us,” he said, “and we will give you some wine and water. When would you like to eat?” I said I would rather sleep than eat. He said that could easily be arranged.

‘I strolled with them towards the house across that great lawn, hearing the noise of the fountain, now dimmer, now nearer; sometimes it seemed miles away and sometimes right in my ears. Whether it was their conversation or my familiarity with them or my fatigue, at any rate, as I crossed the moat I could no longer recall anything save their presence. I was not even troubled by the desire to recall anything; I was full of a complete contentment, and this surging up of familiar things, this surging up of it in a foreign place, without excuse or possible connexion or any explanation whatsoever, seemed to me as natural as breathing.

‘As I crossed the bridge I wholly forgot whence I came or whither I was going, but I knew myself better than ever I had known myself, and every detail of the place was familiar to me.

‘Here I had passed (I thought) many hours of my childhood and my boyhood and my early manhood also. I ceased considering the names and the relation of Philip and the girl.

‘They gave me cold meat and bread and excellent wine, and water to mix with it, and as they continued to speak even the last adumbrations of care fell off me altogether, and my spirit seemed entirely released and free. My approaching sleep beckoned to me like an easy entrance into Paradise. I should wake from it quite simply into the perpetual enjoyment of this place and its companionship. Oh, it was an absolute repose!

‘Philip took me to a little room on the ground floor fitted



with the exquisite care and the simplicity of the French: there was a curtained bed, a thing I love. He lent me night clothes, though it was broad day, because he said that if I undressed and got into the bed I should be much more rested; they would keep everything quiet at that end of the house, and the gentle fall of the water into the moat outside would not disturb me. I said on the contrary it would soothe me, and I felt the benignity of the place possess me like a spell. Remember that I was very tired and had not slept for now thirty hours.

'I remember handling the white counterpane and noting the delicate French pattern upon it, and seeing at one corner the little red silk coronet embroidered, which made me smile. I remember putting my hand upon the cool linen of the pillow-case and smoothing it; then I got into that bed and fell asleep. It was broad noon, with the stillness that comes of a summer noon upon the woods; the air was cool and delicious above the water of the moat, and my windows were open to it.

'The last thing I heard as I dropped asleep was her voice calling to Philip in the corridor. I could have told the very place. I knew that corridor so well. We used to play there when we were children. We used to play at travelling, and we used to invent the names of railway stations for the various doors. Remembering this and smiling at the memory, I fell at once into a blessed sleep.

'... I do not want to annoy you,' said the man apologetically, 'but I really had to tell you this story, and I hardly know how to tell you the end of it.'

'Go on,' said I hurriedly, for I had gone and made two trees one exactly like the other (which in nature was never seen) and I was annoyed with myself.

'Well,' said he, still hesitating and sighing with real sadness, 'when I woke up I was in a third-class carriage; the light was that of late afternoon, and a man had woken me



by tapping my shoulder and telling me that the next station was Chartres. . . . 'That's all.'

He sighed again. He expected me to say something. So I did. I said without much originality: 'You must have dreamed it.'

'No,' said he, very considerably put out, 'that is the point! I didn't! I tell you I can remember exactly every stage from when I left the railway train in the Seine Valley until I got into that bed.'

'It's all very odd,' said I.

'Yes,' said he, 'and so was my mood; but it was real enough. It was the second or third most real thing that has ever happened to me. I am quite certain that it happened to me.'

I remained silent, and rubbed out the top of one of my trees so as to invent a new top for it since I could not draw it as it was. Then, as he wanted me to say something more, I said: 'Well, you must have got into the train somehow.'

'Of course,' said he.

'Well, where did you get into the train?'

'I don't know.'

'Your ticket would have told you that.'

'I think I must have given it up to the man,' he answered doubtfully, 'the guard who told me that the next station was Chartres.'

'Well, it's all very mysterious,' I said.

'Yes,' he said, getting up rather weakly to go on again, 'it is.' And he sighed again. 'I come here every year. I hope,' he added a little wistfully, 'I hope, you see, that it may happen to me again . . . but it never does.'

'It will at last,' said I to comfort him.

And, will you believe it, that simple sentence made him in a moment radiantly happy; his face beamed, and he positively thanked me, thanked me warmly.

'You speak like one inspired,' he said. (I confess I did

not feel like it at all.) 'I shall go much lighter on my way after that sentence of yours.'

He bade me good-bye with some ceremony and slouched off, with his eyes set towards the west and the more distant hills.





THE letters of a people reflect its noblest as architecture reflects its most intimate mind and as its religion (if it has a separate or tribal religion) reflects its military capacity or incapacity. The word 'noblest' is vague, and nobility must here be defined to mean that steadiness in the soul by which it is able to express a fixed character and individuality of its own. Thus a man contradicts himself from passion or from a variety of experience or from the very ambiguity and limitation of words, but he himself resides in all he says, and when this self is clearly and poisedly expressed it is then that we find him noble.

The poet Milton, according to this conception, has best expressed the nobility of the English mind, and in doing a work quite different from any of his peers has marked a sort of standard from which the ideal of English letters does not depart.

Two things are remarkable with regard to English literature, first that it came late into the field of European culture, and secondly that it has proved extraordinarily diversified. The first point is immaterial to my subject; the second is material to it, for it might be superficially imagined that such bewildering complexity and, as it were, lawless exuberance of method and of matter would never find a pole, nor ever be symbolized by but one aspect of it. Yet Milton has found that pole, and Milton's work has afforded that symbol.

In any one moment of English literary history you may contrast two wholly different masterpieces from the end of the fourteenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries. After the first third of the nineteenth, indeed, first-rate work falls into much more commonplace groove, and it is perceptible



that the best verse and the best prose written in English are narrowing in their vocabulary, and, in what is far more important, their way of looking at life. The newspapers have levelled the writers down as with a trowel; you have not side by side the coarse and the refined, the amazing and the steadfast, the grotesque and the terrible; but in all those earlier centuries you had side by side manner and thought so varied that a remote posterity will wonder how such a wealth could have arisen upon so small an area of national soil. *Piers Plowman* and the *Canterbury Tales* are two worlds, and a third world separate from each is the world of those lovely lyrics which are now so nearly forgotten, but which the populace spontaneously engendered and sang throughout the close of the Middle Ages. The sixteenth century was perhaps less modulated, and flowed, especially towards its end, in one simpler stream, but in the seventeenth what a growth of variety from the Jacobean translation of the Bible to Swift. The very decade in which *Paradise Lost* was published corresponded with the first riot of the Restoration.

If we look closely into all this diversity we can find two common qualities which mark out all English work in a particular manner from the work of other nations. To qualities of this kind, which are like colours rather than like measurable things, it is difficult to give a title; I will hazard, however, these two words, 'Adventure' and 'Mystery'. There is no English work of any period, especially is there no English work of any period later than the middle of the sixteenth century, which has not got in it all those emotions which proceed from the love of Adventure. How notable it is, for instance, that Landscape appears and reappears in every diverse form of English verse. Even in Shakespeare you have it now and then as vivid as a little snapshot, and it runs unceasingly through every current of the stream; it glows in Gray's *Elegy*, and it is the binding element of *In Memoriam*. It saves the earlier work of Wordsworth, it



permeates the large effect of Byron, and those two poems, which to-day no one reads, *Thalaba* and *The Curse of Kehama*, are alive with it. It is the very inspiration of Keats and of Coleridge. Now this hunger for Landscape and this vivid sense of it are but aspects of Adventure; for the men who thus feel and speak are the men who, desiring to travel to unknown places, are in a mood for sudden revelations of sea and land. So a living poet has written:

When all the holy primal part of me  
Arises up within me to salute  
The glorious vision of the earth and sea  
That are the kindred of the destitute. . . .

The note of those four lines is the note of Landscape in English letters, and that note is the best proof and effect of Adventure. If any man is too poor to travel (though I cannot imagine any man so poor), or if he is constrained from travel by the unhappy necessities of a slavish life, he can always escape through the door of English letters. Let such a one read the third and fourth books of *Paradise Lost* before he falls asleep and he will find next morning that he has gone on a great journey. Milton by his perpetual and ecstatic delight in these visions of the world was the normal and the central example of an English poet.

As when far off at sea a fleet descri'd  
Hangs in the clouds . . .

or, again,

. . . Hesperus, that led  
The Starry Host, rode brightest 'til the Moon,  
Rising in cloudy majesty, at length  
Apparent Queen, unveiled. . . .

He everywhere, and in a profusion that is, as it were, rebellious against his strict discipline of words, sees and expresses the picture of this world.

If Landscape be the best test of this quality of adventure in English poets and the Milton as their standard, so the mystic character of English verse appears in them and in him. No period could be so formal as to stifle or even to hide this demand of English writers for Mystery and for emotions communicable only by an art allied to music. The passion is so strong that many ill-acquainted with foreign literature will deny such literature any poetic quality because they do not find in it the unmistakable thrill which the English reader demands of a poet as he demands it of a musician. As Landscape might be taken for the best test of Adventure, so of this appetite for the Mysterious the best measurable test is rhythm. Highly accentuated rhythm and emphasis are the marks and the concomitants of that spirit. As powerful a line as any in the language for suddenly evoking intense feeling by no perceptible artifice is that line in *Lycidas*:

Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds.

I confess I can never read that line but I remember a certain river of twenty years ago, nor does revisiting that stream and seeing it again with my eyes so powerfully recall what once it was to those who loved it as does this deathless line. It seems as though the magical power of the poet escaped the effect of time in a way that the senses cannot, and a man curious in such matters might find the existence of such gifts to be a proof of human immortality. The pace at which Milton rides his verse, the strong constraint within which he binds it, deeply accentuate this power of rhythm and the mystical effect it bears. Now you would say a trumpet, now a chorus of human voices, now a flute, now a single distant song. From the fortieth to the fifty-fifth line of the third book *Paradise Lost* has all the power and nature of a solemn chant; the large complaint in it is the complaint of an organ, and one may say indeed in this connexion that



only one thing is lacking in all the tones Milton commanded; he disdained intensity of grief as most artists will disdain intensity of terror. But whereas intensity of terror is no fit subject for man's pen, and has appealed only to the dirtier of our little modern fellows, intense grief has been from the very beginning thought a just subject for verse.

Τῆλε δ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς χέε δέσματα σιγαλόεντα  
 Ἄμπυκα κεκρύφαλόν τ', ἡδὲ πλεκτὴν ἀναδέσμην  
 Κρήδεμνόν θ', ὃ ῥά οἱ δῶκε χρυσέῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ  
 Ἕματι τᾶ, ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἠγάγεθ' Ἕκτωρ  
 Ἕκ δόμου Ἕετίωνος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἔδνα.

Milton will have none of it. It is the absence of that note which has made so many hesitate before the glorious achievement of *Lycidas*, and in this passage which I quote, where Milton comes nearest to the cry of sorrow, it is still no more than what I have called it, a solemn chant.

. . . Thus with the year  
 Seasons return; but not to me returns  
 Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,  
 Or sign of vernal bloom, or Summer's Rose,  
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
 But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
 Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men  
 Cut off, and, for the Book of knowledge fair,  
 Presented with a Universal blanc  
 Of Nature's works, to mee expung'd and ras'd,  
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.  
 So much the rather thou, Celestial light,  
 Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
 Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
 Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
 Of things invisible to mortal sight.

There is one other character in Milton wherein he stands not so much for English letters as for a feature in English nature as a whole, which is a sort of standing apart of the individual. Where this may be good and where evil it is not

for a short appreciation to discuss. It is profoundly national and nowhere will you see it more powerfully than in the verse of this man. Of his life we all know it to be true, but I say it appears even in his verse. There is a sort of *noli me tangere* in it all as though he desired but little friendship and was not broken by one broken love, and contemplated God and the fate of his own soul in a lonely manner; of all the things he drew the thing he could never draw was a collectivity.



## On a Winged Horse and the Exile who Rode Him

IT so happened that one day I was riding my horse Monster in the Berkshire Hills right up above that White Horse which was dug they say by this man and by that man, but no one knows by whom; for I was seeing England, a delightful pastime, but a somewhat anxious one if one is riding a horse. For if one is alone one can sleep where one chooses and walk at one's ease, and eat what God sends one and spend what one has; but when one is responsible for any other being (especially a horse) there come in a thousand farradiddles, for of everything that walks on earth, man (not woman—I use the word in the restricted sense) is the freest and the most unhappy.

Well, then, I was riding my horse and exploring the Island of England, going eastward of a summer afternoon, and I had so ridden along the ridge of the hills for some miles when I came, as chance would have it, upon a very extraordinary being.

He was a man like myself, but his horse, which was grazing by his side, and from time to time snorting in a proud manner, was quite unlike my own. This horse had all the strength of the horses of Normandy, all the lightness, grace, and subtlety of the horses of Barbary, all the conscious value of the horses that race for rich men, all the humour of old horses that have seen the world and will be disturbed by nothing, and all the valour of young horses who have their troubles before them, and race round in paddocks attempting to defeat the passing trains. I say all these things were in the horse, and expressed by various movements of his body, but the list of these qualities is but a hint of the way in which he bore himself; for it was quite clearly apparent as I came nearer and nearer to this strange pair



that the horse before me was very different (as perhaps was the man) from the beings that inhabit this island.

While he was different in all qualities that I have mentioned—or rather in their combination—he also differed physically from most horses that we know, in this, that from his sides and clapt along them in repose was growing a pair of very fine sedate and noble wings. So habited, with such an expression and with such gestures of his limbs, he browsed upon the grass of Berkshire, which, if you expect the grass of Sussex and the grass perhaps of Hampshire, is the sweetest grass in the world. I speak of the chalk-grass; as for the grass of the valleys, I would not eat it in a salad, let alone give it to a beast.

The man who was the companion rather than the master of this charming animal sat upon a lump of turf singing gently to himself and looking over the plain of Central England, the plain of the Upper Thames, which men may see from these hills. He looked at it with a mixture of curiosity, of memory, and of desire which was very interesting but also a little pathetic to watch. And as he looked at it he went on crooning his little song until he saw me, when with great courtesy he ceased and asked me in the English language whether I did not desire companionship.

I answered him that certainly I did, though not more than was commonly the case with me, for I told him that I had had companionship in several towns and inns during the past few days, and that I had had but a few hours' bout of silence and of loneliness.

'Which period,' I added, 'is not more than sufficient for a man of my years, though I confess that in early youth I should have found it intolerable.'

When I had said this he nodded gravely, and I in my turn began to wonder of what age he might be, for his eyes and his whole manner were young, but there was a certain knowledge and gravity in his expression and in the posture



of his body which in another might have betrayed middle age. He wore no hat, but a great quantity of his own hair, which was blown about by the light summer wind upon these heights. As he did not reply to me, I asked him a further question, and said:

‘I see you are gazing upon the plain. Have you interests or memories in that view? I ask you without compunction so delicate a question because it is as open to you to lie as it was to me when I lied to them only yesterday morning, a little beyond Wayland’s Cave, telling them that I had come to make sure of the spot where St. George conquered the Dragon, though, in truth, I had come for no such purpose, and telling them that my name was so-and-so, whereas it was nothing of the kind.’

He brightened up at this, and said: ‘You are quite right in telling me that I am free to lie if I choose, and I would be very happy to lie to you if there were any purpose in so doing, but there is none. I gaze upon this plain with the memories that are common to all men when they gaze upon a landscape in which they have had a part in the years recently gone by. That is, the plain fills me with a sort of longing, and yet I cannot say that the plain has treated me unjustly. I have no complaint against it. God bless the plain!’ After thinking a few moments, he added: ‘I am fond of Wantage; Wallingford has done me no harm; Oxford gave me many companions; I was not drowned at Dorchester beyond the Little Hills; and the best of men gave me a true farewell in Faringdon yonder. Moreover, Cumnor is my friend. Nevertheless, I like to indulge in a sort of sadness when I look over this plain.’

I then asked him whither he would go next.

He answered: ‘My horse flies, and I am therefore not bound to any particular track or goal, especially in these light airs of summer when all the heaven is open to me.’

As he said this I looked at his mount and noticed that



when he shook his skin as horses will do in the hot weather to rid themselves of flies, he also passed a little tremor through his wings, which were large and goose-grey, and, spreading gently under that effort, seemed to give him coolness.

‘You have,’ said I, ‘a remarkable horse.’

At this word he brightened up as men do when something is spoken of that interests them nearly, and he answered: ‘Indeed, I have! and I am very glad you like him. There is no such other horse to my knowledge in England, though I have heard that some still linger in Ireland and in France, and that a few foals of the breed have been dropped of late years in Italy, but I have not seen them.’

‘How did you come by this horse?’ said I; ‘if it is not trespassing upon your courtesy to ask you so delicate a question.’

‘Not at all; not at all,’ he answered. ‘This kind of horse runs wild upon the heaths of morning and can be caught only by Exiles: and I am one. . . . Moreover, if you had come three or four years later than you have I should have been able to give you an answer in rhyme, but I am sorry to say that a pestilent stricture of the imagination, or rather, of the compositive faculty so constrains me that I have not yet finished the poem I have been writing with regard to the discovery and service of this beast.’

‘I have great sympathy with you,’ I answered, ‘I have been at the ballade of Val-ès-Dunes since the year 1897 and I have not yet completed it.’

‘Well, then,’ he said, ‘you will be patient with me when I tell you that I have but three verses completed.’ Whereupon without further invitation he sang in a low and clear voice the following verse:

It's ten years ago to-day you turned me out of doors  
To cut my feet on flinty lands and stumble down the shores.  
And I thought about the all in all. . . .



‘The “all in all,”’ I said, ‘is weak.’

He was immensely pleased with this, and, standing up, seized me by the hand. ‘I know you now,’ he said, ‘for a man who does indeed write verse. I have done everything I could with those three syllables, and by the grace of Heaven I shall get them right in time. Anyhow, they are the stop-gap of the moment, and with your leave I shall reserve them, for I do not wish to put words like “tumty tum” into the middle of my verse.’

I bowed to him, and he proceeded:

And I thought about the all in all, and more than I could tell;  
But I caught a horse to ride upon and rode him very well.  
He had flame behind the eyes of him and wings upon his side—  
And I ride; and I ride!

‘Of how many verses do you intend this metrical composition to be?’ said I, with great interest.

‘I have sketched out thirteen,’ said he firmly, ‘but I confess that the next ten are so embryonic in this year 1907 that I cannot sing them in public.’ He hesitated a moment, then added: ‘They have many fine single lines, but there is as yet no composition or unity about them.’ And as he recited the words ‘composition’ and ‘unity’ he waved his hand about like a man sketching a cartoon.

‘Give me, then,’ said I, ‘at any rate the last two. For I had rapidly calculated how many would remain of his scheme.’

He was indeed pleased to be so challenged, and continued to sing:

And once atop of Lambourne Down, towards the hill of Clere,  
I saw the host of Heaven in rank and Michael with his spear  
And Turpin, out of Gascony, and Charlemagne the lord,  
And Roland of the Marches with his hand upon his sword  
For fear he should have need of it;—and forty more beside!  
And I ride; and I ride!  
For you that took the all in all . . .

‘That again is weak,’ I murmured.

‘You are quite right,’ he said gravely, ‘I will rub it out.’  
Then he went on:

For you that took the all in all, the things you left were three:  
A loud Voice for singing, and keen Eyes to see,  
And a spouting Well of Joy within that never yet was dried!  
And I ride!

He sang this last in so fierce and so exultant a manner that I was impressed more than I cared to say, but not more than I cared to show. As for him, he cared little whether I was impressed or not; he was exalted and detached from the world.

There were no stirrups upon the beast. He vaulted upon it, and said as he did so:

‘You have put me into the mood, and I must get away!’

And though the words were abrupt, he *did* speak them with such a grace that I will always remember them!

He then touched the flanks of his horse with his heels (on which there were no spurs) and at once beating the air powerfully twice or thrice with its wings it spurned the turf of Berkshire and made out southward and upward into the sunlit air, a pleasing and a glorious sight.

In a very little while they had dwindled to a point of light and were soon mixed with the sky. But I went on more lonely along the crest of the hills, very human, riding my horse Monster, a mortal horse—I had almost written a human horse. My mind was full of silence.

Some of those to whom I have related this adventure criticize it by the method of questions and of cross-examination proving that it could not have happened precisely where it did; showing that I left the vale so late in the afternoon that I could not have found this man and his mount at the hour I say I did, and making all manner of



comments upon the exact way in which the feathers (which they say are those of a bird) grew out of the hide of the horse, and so forth. There are no witnesses of the matter, and I go lonely, for many people will not believe, and those who do believe believe too much.

## On a Faerie Castle ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞

A WOMAN whose presence in English letters will continue to increase wrote of a cause to which she had dedicated her life that it was like that Faerie Castle of which men became aware when they wandered upon a certain moor. In that deserted place (the picture was taken from the writings of Sir Walter Scott) the lonely traveller heard above him a noise of bugles in the air, and thus a Faerie Castle was revealed; but again, when the traveller would reach it, a doom comes upon him, and in the act of its attainment it vanishes away.

We are northern, full of dreams in the darkness; this Castle is caught in glimpses, a misty thing. It is seen a moment—then it mixes once again with the mist of our northern air, and when that mist has lifted from the heath there is nothing before the watcher but a bare upland open to the wind and roofed only by hurrying cloud. Yet in the moment of revelation most certainly the traveller perceived it, and the call of its bugle-guard was very clear. He continues his way perceiving only the things he knows—trees bent by the gale, rude heather, the gravel of the path, and mountains all around. In that landscape he has no companion; yet he cannot but be haunted, as he goes, by towers upon which he surely looked, and by the sharp memory of bugle-notes that still seem to startle his hearing.

In our legends of Western Europe this Castle perpetually returns. It has been seen not only on the highlands of Ireland, of Wales, of Brittany, of the Asturias, of Normandy, and of Auvergne, but in the plains also, and on those river meadows where wealth comes so fast that even simple men early forget the visions of the hills. The imagination, or



rather the speech, of our race has created or recognized throughout our territory this stronghold which was not altogether of the world.

Queen Iseult, as she sat with Tristan in a Castle Garden, towards the end of a summer night, whispered to him: 'Tristan, they say that this Castle is Faerie; it is revealed at the sound of a Trumpet, but presently it vanishes away,' and as she said it the bugles rang dawn.

Raymond of Saragossa saw this Castle, also, as he came down from the wooded hills after he had found the water of life and was bearing it towards the plain. He saw the towers quite clearly and also thought he heard the call upon that downward road at whose end he was to meet with Bramimonde. But he saw it thence only, in the exaltation of the summits as he looked over the falling forest to the plain and the Sierra miles beyond. He saw it thence only. Never after upon either bank of Ebro could he come upon it, nor could any man assure him of the way.

In the Story of Val-ès-Dunes, Hugh the Fortinbras out of the Cotentin had a castle of this kind. For when, after the battle, they count the dead, the Priest finds in the sea-grass among other bodies that of this old Lord. . . .

. . . and Hugh that trusted in his glass,  
But rode not home the day;  
Whose title was the Fortinbras  
With the Lords of his Array.

This was that old Hugh the Fortinbras who had been Lord to the Priest's father, so that when the battle was engaged the Priest watched him from the opposing rank, and saw him fall, far off, just as the line broke and before the men of the Caux country had room to charge. It was easy to see him, for he rode a high horse and was taller than other Normans, and when his horse was wounded. . . .

. . . The girth severed and the saddle swung  
And he went down  
He never more sang winter songs  
In his High Town.

In his High Town that Faëry is  
And stands on Harcourt Lea;  
To summon him up his arrier-ban  
His writ beyond the mountain ran.  
My father was his serving-man;  
Although the farm was free.  
Before the angry wars began  
He was a friend to me!

In his High Town that Faëry is  
And stands on Harcourt bay;  
The Fisher driving through the night  
Makes harbour by that castle height  
And moors him till the day:  
But with the broadening of the light  
It vanishes away.

So the Faerie Castle comes in by an illusion in the Ballad of the Battle of Val-ès-Dunes.

What is this vision which our race has so symbolized or so seen and to which are thus attached its oldest memories? It is the miraculous moment of intense emotion in which whether we are duped or transfigured we are in touch with a reality firmer than the reality of this world. The Faerie Castle is the counterpart and the example of those glimpses which every man has enjoyed, especially in youth, and which no man even in the dust of middle age can quite forget. In these were found a complete harmony and satisfaction which were not negative nor dependent upon the absence of discord—such completion as criticism may conceive—but as positive as colour or as music, and clothed as it were in a living body of joy.

The vision may be unreal or real, in either case it is valid:



if it is unreal it is a symbol of the world behind the world. But it is no less a symbol; even if it is unreal it is a sudden seeing of the place to which our faces are set during this unbroken marching of years.

Once on the Sacramento River a little before sunrise I looked eastward from a boat and saw along the dawn the black edge of the Sierras. The peaks were as sharp as are the Malvern from the Cotswold, though they were days and days away. They made a broad jagged band intensely black against the glow of the sky. I drew them so. A tiny corner of the sun appeared between two central peaks: at once the whole range was suffused with glory. The sun was wholly risen and the mountains had completely disappeared—in the place where they had been was the sky of the horizon.

At another time, also in a boat, I saw beyond a spit of the Tunisian coast, as it seemed a flat island. Through the heat, with which the air trembled, was a low gleam of sand, a palm or two, and, less certainly, the flats and domes of a white native village. Our course, which was to round the point, went straight for this island, and, as we approached, it became first doubtful, then flickering, then a play of light upon the waves. It was a mirage, and it had melted into the air.

There is a part of us, as all the world knows, which is immixed with change and by change only can live. There is another part which lies behind motion and time, and that part is ourselves. This diviner part has surely a stronghold which is also an inheritance. It has a home which perhaps it remembers and which certainly it conceives at rare moments during our path over the moor.

This is that Faerie Castle. It is revealed at the sound of a trumpet; we turn our eyes, we glance and we perceive it; we strain to reach it—in the very effort of our going the doom of human labour falls upon us and it vanishes away.

It is real or unreal. It is unreal like that island which I thought to see some miles from Africa, but which was not truly there: for the ship when it came to the place that island had occupied sailed easily over an empty sea. It is real, like those high Sierras which I drew from the Sacramento River at the turn of the night and which were suddenly obliterated by the rising sun.

Where the vision is but mirage, even there it is a symbol of our goal; where it stands fast and true, for however brief a moment, it can illumine, and should determine the whole of our lives. For such sights are the manifestation of that glory which lies permanent beyond the changing of the world. Of such a sort are the young passionate intentions to relieve the burden of mankind, first love, the mood created by certain strains of music, and—as I am willing to believe—the Walls of Heaven.



## The Cad's Encyclopaedia ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I HAVE a wealthy friend. He made his money by accident during the war. The Government owed him £500. A careless clerk (who was talking to a minx at the time) added three noughts without thinking, and on his modestly pointing out the error, the department wrote back to say they never made mistakes. And so it rested at that. After long hesitation how to get rid of all this money, he is at last engaged upon what I cannot but think a very useful work. I only wish that every rich man could be inspired by similarly valuable ideas, instead of frittering away money upon buying newspapers and souls and uneatable food in noisy restaurants.

This rich friend of mine had always had the idea, when he was poor, of getting together a Cad's Encyclopaedia.

All the publishers whom he approached told him (with truth) that nothing is more venturesome than an Encyclopaedia, and that even when one is pretty sure of a large public for one's subject the outlay is very heavy and the risk considerable.

My friend had—in the days of his poverty—prepared a detailed memorandum in which he urged the advantage of his scheme. He pointed out that there was an enormous number of Cads in the world, and that even those who read books and could afford to buy an Encyclopaedia amounted to many millions. He urged the complete novelty of the scheme, the long-felt want, and all the rest of it. But they replied to him that a fatal drawback was the name.

'No doubt,' said the head of one great firm, 'there is a demand, and Cads naturally desire a book of reference of their own for their guidance and instruction; even those who are not Cads, but only interested in the subject of Cads,



would also want it for making research. But few would buy it under that title because it is one which men avoid applying to themselves and dislike having applied to them by others. You will have noticed,' said the great man genially, 'that men are eager to ascribe to themselves ignorance, fatuous good nature, even appalling vices, but never Caddishness.'

My friend could not but see the justice of the last remark, but he still maintained that a thing was more successful in the long run under its true name. He persisted in his idea, and when the accident of which I speak had suddenly made him rich he proceeded to realize it.

The first volume will be out next October. It will be privately published by a new firm created for the purpose. I hope I shall receive no correspondence upon it, because I cannot be bothered to negotiate its sale, but I shall give my friend the best advice as to how to put it upon the market in the unavoidable shyness of the usual agents.

This Encyclopaedia was not an easy thing to get together, apart from the expense. First of all there was the difficulty of apportioning space. That is a difficulty attaching to all Encyclopaedias, but particularly to an Encyclopaedia on, and for the use of, and conveying information upon, Cads. In an Encyclopaedia of Agriculture, for instance, the editors can make a fair guess as to what space will be wanted for each pest attaching to particular forms of vegetation, but it was difficult indeed to determine which habits of the Cad would require most description; what should be set aside for his house, what for his clothes, what for his manners; how many pages should be allowed to the Cad in Literature; how many inches to the more exotic types of Cad, such as the Negroid Cad, the Dago Cad, the International Wagon-lit Cad, and so on.

Then there was a great debate between my friend and his sister on the vexed question of the She-Cad. I took part in this and strongly proclaimed my own opinion, which I have



held for years after a very close examination of the matter, that there is no such thing as a She-Cad. A Cad is the opposite of a gentleman, just as a civilian is the opposite of a soldier, or a layman of a cleric. But there are no She-Gentlemen and therefore there are no She-Cads. To this it was objected by my friend's sister that she had personally known and handled several She-Cads, and she began to give examples. But I am glad to say my friend agreed with me that the type did not exist, and showed how every example his sister quoted was a false type and no more a She-Cad than the lemon sole is a sole, or margarine butter.

Under 'V' (a volume which we hope to reach—if the next great war can be staved off—round about 1930) we have, I am glad to say, a long and valuable article on the Virtues of Cads. This article is from various pens. All the introductory part has been written by an expert at party headquarters, and the diagrams have been drawn by a diner-out who has always got on well with Cads and has an exhaustive knowledge of their habits. There is a special division on the financial virtues of Cads by a banker and on the spiritual virtues of Cads by a divine of modernist complexion. But the subject is so large that we have a reference in small capitals at the end of the article to other special articles in the same department, and especially to what may be called the Calendar of Saints among Cads, that is, short biographies of Cads who have excelled in one or other of the virtues.

Among the special articles, that devoted to the Literary Cad is treated in two aspects—one by an opponent of such Cads, the other by an eminent writer who is himself a Cad. Under the same letter 'L', we have a biography and bibliography of the Cad's Laureate who—thank Heaven—is still with us.

'C', which will appear in the second volume, due next December, will have under the heading 'Candour' an



article where the necessary presence of candour in Caddishness is developed in a masterly fashion by a psychological expert, and the fatal effect upon Caddishness of worldly wisdom and subtlety is conclusively proved by an aged novelist. No one can be a Cad (it is there clearly proved) who has not a simple heart. Under the same letter, at the word 'Concert', we have 'The Cads' Concert'; a full description, with a detailed bibliography of the latest development in Cad literature, which is the publication to the whole world of everything told one in private, and a great deal that has not been told one at all.

Under 'I' there will be an equally interesting and lengthy article upon the Iconography of Cads, with a list of their principal portraits and busts, including public statues of London and other great cities; and under 'T' a short, but very illuminating, essay upon the Theology of Cads, illustrated by experts from the whole range of apologetics, beginning with the opinions of the Early Fathers on the matter, and ending, at any rate for the moment, with those of Mr. Wells.

A number of details which would hardly occur to the general reader have been picked out with singular accuracy of judgement by my friend, whose industry and zeal I cannot over-praise. For instance, he himself deals, under 'S', with the Cad and Spurs—showing why Cads hate Spurs when they do not wear them themselves, and why when they do wear them themselves they wear them too often and in incongruous surroundings.

Similarly we have the Cad and Checks—divided into cheques on a bank and checks which you wear, the latter coming first for alphabetical reasons. This should, perhaps, appear in the article on Cads and Apparel, under 'A', but though the article 'Apparel' is exhaustive in its way, readers are referred to special departments of this sort for more detailed acquaintance with their subject. Among other



points the famous sentence: '*In colour he affected the maroon, in pattern a quiet check*', is exhaustively discussed by various hands and its disputed authorship finally established.

Under 'A', by the way, we also have Cad's Architecture—a very difficult subject—and a more general psychological and medical heading of Animosity in Cads. The colouring of Cads, natural and artificial, we have, after some debate, put forward to the letter 'P' under Pigment, because 'C' was getting unwieldy. But Cad Catching or the art of hunting and tracking down a Cad will be included in its natural place with many diagrams and a list of the principal drugs, wines, and tobaccos used in the trade.

Cad Curing, on the other hand—that is, the art of curing a Cad of his Caddishness—has been rejected from the heading 'C' under the very just decision that it is a false category. There is, properly speaking, no curing of a Cad, because Caddishness is not a disease but a condition which we are perfectly open to accept and even to admire if we please. The whole subject has therefore been relegated to 'E', where it is dealt with under the rubric 'Elimination'. It also appears in the first volume briefly by way of cross-reference under Auto-suggestion with formulae for daily repetition, such as '*Whatever else I am, I am a gentleman,*' or again, '*It is all imagination. I didn't really offend them at all.*' In this department we have valuable exercises described, one of the most original of which is the setting apart of certain streets in London of a particular length (among others, Gower Street and the Cromwell Road) down which the patient is advised to walk at his ordinary gait, repeating the formula, over and over again just after he has paid a call at some house where he found himself coldly received.

The Encyclopaedia can be bought at a reduction of 20 per cent by those who pay for the whole twelve volumes in advance. My friend, who has already learned the elements of finance (he got his fortune a full six years ago),

has calculated that at the present rate of 7 per cent which any fool can obtain upon good security to-day, he is up about 13*s.* 2*d.* a copy on each subscriber who falls into the trap. He is preparing a cheaper edition to appear immediately after the lists of the first expensive edition are closed. This cheaper edition will consist of the unsold sheets of the first, cut down and put into new cases. I forgot to add that there are a certain number of coloured plates in each volume and a very thorough and exhaustive index, on the new American system, known technically as 'The Labyrinth'. There is also a number of very handsome maps showing the geographical distribution of Cads and elaborate curves, giving their vital statistics, growth, and decay. Every set has attached to it a general 'All In' policy of insurance with two new clauses specially drawn up, one for the use of Cads threatened by the various dangers peculiar to their rank, and the other for Non-Cads, ensuring them against the various dangers peculiar to the Cad's approach and neighbourhood. All this insurance is free.



## On a Poet



THE days in which Swinburne died, it was remarked by all, were days peculiar to the air and to the landscape which had inspired his verse. One riding in those days upon the high ridges of the New Forest saw before him in the distant hills of Dorset and of Wiltshire, in the very clear line of the Island, in the belt of sea, and in the great billows of oak woods and of beech that lift up from the hollows, in the clear wind and the new large clouds of spring before it, everything which his poetry meant to those who were of one tongue with him, and all that part of it which, though not incommunicable to foreigners, made him the least translatable of modern writers. Nowhere was it easier to understand what influences had made, or rather driven, his form of expression than on those heights looking towards those hills, and under such a sky, feeling that wind come right from off the English sea.

For it is the chief characteristic of Swinburne's work, and the one which will be noted of him throughout whatever changes the future may bring to our taste, that his motive (if one may use this metaphor) was the landscape and the air of England—especially of South England and of that very roll of land from the chalk to the chalk, from the northern Avon of Wiltshire to the cliffs of the Island which a man surveys from the ridges of which I speak.

Let it not be forgotten that revolutions in taste are among the most certain as they are among the most mysterious proofs of the power of rapid change combined with unity which is peculiar to Europe, and which has been discovered in no other civilizations than that of the Europeans. Only some very few have escaped the chastening of that reflection. There are indeed some classics—one might count them



upon the fingers of both hands—which no transition of taste much raises or much diminishes, and chief among these is the sovereignty of Homer. But almost all the others do suffer violent neglects, nay, may be for a generation and more violently despised; or again, violently adored. And so rapid are these fluctuations of opinion—and so sincere while they remain—that we must always approach with extreme care the criticism of a contemporary. The fluctuations of opinion will at last decide an average. Truth will be plotted out, a clear and intellectual thing, from the welter of mere stimulus. Criticism will acquire, and with every new critic acquire further, certitudes and fixed points of judgement; and the reputation of a great poet is moulded and informed by the process of time, as all other worthy things are moulded and informed by the process of time. Let us attempt then to stand apart from the feeling of the moment and to ask ourselves what certainly was present in the work of the great writer who died in this uprush of new weather, and this invitation to life that was sweeping over his own land. It is by qualities which, whether we approve them or disapprove, are certainly present in a writer that his reputation with posterity will be made, not by the emotions of the moment which those qualities arouse; nor is any great writer (nor any small one, for that matter) to be judged in general terms, but in particular—since writing is like a man's voice, and always has in it, no matter who produces it, if it be closely examined, characters not general but individual. A man who should have resisted the wave of enthusiasm for Lord Byron, but who should carefully have noted what at any rate he *was*, what his verse was and what it was not, who should have distinguished between what he certainly did easily and what he as certainly could not do, might have praised too much or too little, but that which his analysis had distinguished would enable him to know more or less what kind of posterity would judge Byron, and how. He



would have been able to guess, for instance, that a time of youth and of largess would have drunk him in great draughts, a time of age and of exactitude would have found in him a mere looseness of words; he would have been able to see why foreigners especially could discover his greatness; why the reading of him was proper to a time of active and physical combat against oppression, was improper to any nation which a long peace had corrupted, or to any class which the opportunity for every licence and the power through wealth to approach every enjoyment had satiated and cloyed.

If we so examine Swinburne we shall, as I have said, first notice that in all his work the mere nature of South England drives him. It is the expression often uncontrolled, always spontaneous, of an intense communion with that air, those colours, such hills and such a sea. In this Swinburne, wholly novel as was his medium of expression, was peculiarly and rigidly national. Whoever best knows that landscape and that sky best feels him. Whoever in the future most neglects it or knows it least will least fully appreciate or will perhaps even neglect his work. In whatever times the inspiration of that belt of land weakens in the men who inhabit it (it weakened in the eighteenth century, for instance), in such a time the influence of Swinburne's work will weaken too.

Next there must be noted that in him much more than in any other writer of the language, or, at any rate, much more than in any other modern writer of prominence, words followed rhythm, and the poem, though an organized and constructed thing, went bowling before the general music of its metre as a ship over-canvased goes bowling before the general gale. That music underlies all lyrical expression, and for that matter poetry of every other kind as well, all critics have always known. But it is modern to make of it, as it were, the necessary and conscious substructure of the work, and Verlaine, who put it in his *Poetic Art* as the chief rule to



consider 'Music and always Music', was, in laying down such a law, the extreme expression of his time. Sense is not sacrificed wholly in any place, it is but rarely imperilled even by this motive in Swinburne. But one feels that reason has in the construction no divine place, but is subsidiary—as it is subsidiary in unworded tunes, as it is subsidiary in great and vivid dreams, as it is subsidiary (since one should be just even in judging extravagance) in all the major emotions of the human soul: in love, in combat, in despair. And in this necessary service of rhythm, this bondage to music, is to be discovered the source of another characteristic in the work: the perpetual repetition. Two men, both sedulous and scholarly admirers, will be equally struck by the apparently contradictory judgements that Swinburne was unequalled in the range of his vocabulary, and that Swinburne was, quite beyond parallel, repetitive. Each judgement would strike one of the two types of admirer as a paradox or a truism. Yet both are true, and both have an illuminating meaning when his work is considered. That vast vocabulary (and if you will be at the pains to note word upon word or to make a short concordance you will see that the word 'vast' is just)—that vast vocabulary, I say, proceeded from the necessity of satisfying the ear. An exact shade of length and emphasis were needed; they must be exactly filled, and some one word out of the thousands upon thousands which the numerically richest language of our time possesses must be hit upon to do the work. This surely was the source of that wide range. So also was it the source of the repetition.

Repetition is discovered in literature under two aspects. It is deliberate and admirably designed, or it is involuntary and an odious symptom of fatigue. The repetitions of Catullus in their way, the repetitions of the Hebrew poets in theirs, were meant to be; or rather (for their voluntary quality is obvious) they were exactly designed to produce a particular effect, and did produce it; the repetition of those



who fail, involuntary and symptomatic of fatigue, may be neglected. Swinburne's repetitions were neither of the one kind nor of the other; they were the recurrence of a set of words or of single words which suited the sound in his head. And just as to fit exactly a void of known form one word exactly fitting must be found (fitting not reason but the ear) so those which had been found to fit particular rhythms must be used again to fit those rhythms when they recurred, as naturally and as necessarily as a man picks up this tool and that to do some particular bit of carving which he has found it apt for in the past. The word in Swinburne was subordinate.

It is a commonplace, and a true one—to pass to another matter—that the English writers of the later nineteenth century (and not the writers alone) reposed upon the Jacobean translation of the Old Testament. That unique and fundamental piece of work, the monumental characters in which appear more largely with every process of retreat from it, whether in time or in conviction, has so formed that generation that it was itself almost unconscious of the enormous effect. Swinburne is as full of it as Kipling; the ready-made phrases of weary political discussion are full of it. The whole national life, in so far as modes of expression are concerned, was filled with it. Many of Swinburne's rhythms were the rhythms of the English Psaltry, and perpetually you will find some sounding final phrase, especially if it ends in an interrogation, to be a phrase of Biblical character or even a Biblical transcription. Herein, again, as in that effect of landscape and of air, he is national in every particle of his poetic being; and one may remark that this note is the note of unity in him, and that a recognition of it explains what has confused so many critics of his life and of his opinion. The man who in youth was ardent for a liberty which leant much nearer to anarchy than to the republic, who ranged, as the fashion was over all Europe, to find



subjects for that mood, in age perpetually sounded a note which had in it something exaggerated of fury and of protest against whatever might be thought to be weakening the very old and fixed boundaries of the national life. Yet it was the same man whose extreme facility poured out in either field; the passionate protest of the first years was a protest drawn from the untrammelled nature about him which ran through him and made him write. The convinced and extreme political insistence of his later verse was drawn from the same source. It was still the surroundings of his own land that compelled him.

There is one last thing to be said: the work has been called pagan. It is the commonest praise or blame attached to the achievement. Those who attach it, whether in praise or blame, have not clearly seen the pagan world. By pagan we mean that long, long manhood of Europe (a thousand years long to our knowledge—how much longer we know not) in which the mind certainly reposed and was certainly in tune with the nature of the Mediterranean. Swinburne's great love of that mood was the love of a foreigner, of a much belated man, and of a man of the North. The sea of the *Atalanta in Calydon* is an English sea. All that attitude in him was reaction and a protest. It was full of yearning: now pagan paganism was not full of this. The very earliest moment in which a protest of that kind is to be found is the Fourth Century. For the transformation between the old and the new lay in this, that there came upon our race in the first four centuries of the Roman Empire a yearning which must be satisfied, and men since then have accepted an assuagement of it or have passionately protested against that assuagement, or have cynically ridiculed it, but they have never remained other than profoundly influenced by it. What is called 'paganism' since that change came is not of marble and is not calm: it is a product, not of the old time but of the new.



## Ethandune



IN the parish of East Knoyle, in the county of Wiltshire, and towards the western side of that parish, there is an isolated knoll, gorse-covered, abrupt, and somewhat over 700 feet above the sea in height. From the summit of it a man can look westward, northward, and eastward over a great rising roll of countryside.

To the west, upon the sky-line of a level range of hills, not high, runs that long wood called Selwood and there makes an horizon. To the north the cultivated uplands merge into high open down: bare turf of the chalk, which closes the view for miles against the sky, and is the watershed between the northern and the southern Avon. Eastward that chalk land falls into the valley which holds Salisbury.

From this high knoll a man perceives the two days' march which Alfred made with his levies when he summoned the men of three shires to fight with him against the Danes; he overthrew them at Ethandune.

The struggle of which these two days were the crisis was of more moment to the history of Britain and of Europe than any other which has imperilled the survival of either between the Roman time and our own.

That generation in which the stuff of society had worn most threadbare, and in which its continued life (individually the living memory of the Empire and informed by the Faith) was most in peril, was not the generation which saw the raids of the fifth century, nor even that which witnessed the breaking of the Mahomedan tide in the eighth, when the Christians carried it through near Poitiers, between the River Vienne and the Chain, the upland south of Chatellerault. The gravest moment of peril was for that generation whose



grandfathers could remember the order of Charlemagne, and which fought its way desperately through the perils of the later ninth century.

Then it was, during the great Scandinavian harrying of the North and West, that Europe might have gone down. Its monastic establishment was shaken; its relics of central government were perishing of themselves; letters had sunk to nothing and building had already about it something nearly savage, when the swirl of the pirates came up all its rivers. And though legend had taken the place of true history, and though the memories of our race were confused almost to dreaming, we were conscious of our past and of our inheritance, and seemed to feel that now we had come to a narrow bridge which might or might not be crossed: a bridge already nearly ruined.

If that bridge were not crossed there would be no future for Christendom.

Southern Britain and Northern Gaul received the challenge, met it, were victorious, and so permitted the survival of all the things we know. At Ethandune and before Paris the double business was decided. Of these twin victories the first was accomplished in this island. Alfred is its hero, and its site is that chalk upland, above the Vale of Trowbridge, near which the second of the two white horses is carved: the hills above Eddington and Bratton upon the Westbury road.

The Easter of 878 had seen no King in England. Alfred was hiding with some small band in the marshes that lie south of Mendip against the Severn Sea. It was one of those eclipses which time and again in the history of Christian warfare have just preceded the actions by which Christendom has re-arisen. In Whitsun week Alfred reappeared.

There is a place at the southern terminal of the great wood, Selwood, which bears a Celtic affix, and is called



'Penselwood', 'the head of the forest', and near it there stood (not to within living memory, but nearly so) a shire-stone called Egbert's Stone; there Wiltshire, Somerset, and Dorset meet. It is just eastward of the gap by which men come by the south round Selwood into the open country. There the levies, that is the lords of Somerset and of Wiltshire and their followers, some also riding from Hampshire, met the King. But many had fled over sea from fear of the Pagans.

'And seeing the King, as was meet, come to life again as it were after such tribulations, and receiving him, they were filled with an immense joy, and there the camp was pitched.'

Next day the host set out eastward to try its last adventure with the barbarians who had ruined half the West.

Day was just breaking when the levies set forth and made for the uplands and for the water partings. Not by mere and the marshes of the valley, but by the great camp of White Sheet and the higher land beyond it, the line of marching and mounted men followed the King across the open turf of the chalk to where three Hundreds meet, and where the gathering of the people for justice and the courts of the Counts had been held before the disasters of that time had broken up the land.

It was a spot bare of houses but famous for a tree which marked the junction of the Hundreds. No more than three hundred years ago this tree still stood and bore the name of the Iley Oak. The place of that day's camp stands up above the water of Deveril, and is upon the continuation of that Roman road from Sarum to the Mendips and to the sea, which is lost so suddenly and unaccountably upon its issue from the great Ridge wood. The army had marched ten miles, and there the second camp was pitched.

With the next dawn the advance upon the Danes was made.

The whole of that way (which should be famous in every

household in this country) is now deserted and unknown. The host passed over the high rolling land of the Downs from summit to summit until—from that central crest which stands above and to the east of Westbury—they saw before them, directly northward and a mile away, the ring of earthwork which is called to-day 'Bratton Castle'. Upon the slope between, the great host of the pirates came out to battle. It was there, from those naked heights that overlook the great plain of the northern Avon, that the fate of England was decided.

The end of that day's march and action was the pressing of the Pagans back behind their earthworks, and the men who had saved our great society sat down before the ringed embankment watching all the gates of it, killing all the stragglers that had failed to reach that protection, and rounding up the stray horses and the cattle of the Pagans.

That siege endured for fourteen days. At the end of it the Northmen treated, conquered 'by hunger, by cold, and by fear'. Alfred took hostages 'as many as he willed'. Guthrum, their King, accepted our baptism, and Britain took that upward road which Gaul seven years later was to follow when the same anarchy was broken by Eudes under the walls of Paris.

All this great affair we have doubtfully followed to-day in no more than some three hundred words of Latin, come down doubtfully over a thousand years. But the thing happened where and as I have said. It should be as memorable as those great battles in which the victories of the Republic established our exalted but perilous modern day.



## On Cheeses



IF antiquity be the test of nobility, as many affirm and none deny (saving, indeed, that family which takes for its motto *Sola Virtus Nobilitas*, which may mean that virtue is the only nobility, but which may also mean, mark you, that nobility is the only virtue—and anyhow denies that nobility is tested by the lapse of time), *if*, I say, antiquity be the only test of nobility, then cheese is a very noble thing.

But wait a moment: there was a digression in that first paragraph which to the purist might seem of a complicated kind.

Were I writing algebra (I wish I were) I could have analysed my thoughts by the use of square brackets, round brackets, twiddly brackets, and the rest, all properly set out in order so that a Common Fool could follow them.

But no such luck! I may not write of algebra here; for there is a rule current in all newspapers that no man may write upon any matter save upon those in which he is more learned than all his human fellows that drag themselves so slowly daily forward to the grave.

So I had to put the thing in the very common form of a digression, and very nearly to forget that great subject of cheese which I had put at the very head and title of this.

Which reminds me: had I followed the rule set down by a London journalist the other day (and of the proprietor of his paper I will say nothing—though I might have put down the remark to his proprietor) I would have hesitated to write that first paragraph. I would have hesitated, did I say? Griffins' tails! Nay—Hippogriffs and other things of the night! I would not have dared to write it at all! For this journalist made a law and promulgated it, and the law was



this: that no man should write that English which could not be understood if all the punctuation were left out. Punctuation, I take it, includes brackets, which the Lord of Printers knows are a very modern part of punctuation indeed.

Now let the horripilised reader look up again at the first paragraph (it will do him no harm), and think how it would look all written out in fair uncials like the beautiful Gospels of St. Chad, which anyone may see for nothing in the cathedral of Lichfield, an English town famous for eight or nine different things: as Garrick, Doctor Johnson, and its two opposite inns. Come, read that first paragraph over now and see what you could make of it if it were written out in uncials—that is, not only without punctuation, but without any division between the words. Wow! As the philosopher said when he was asked to give a plain answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

And now to cheese. I have had quite enough of digressions and of follies. They are the happy youth of an article. They are the springtime of it. They are its riot. I am approaching the middle age of this article. Let us be solid upon the matter of cheese.

I have premised its antiquity, which is of two sorts, as is that of a nobleman. First, the antiquity of its lineage; secondly, the antiquity of its self. For we all know that when we meet a nobleman we revere his nobility very much if he be himself old, and that this quality of age in him seems to marry itself in some mysterious way with the antiquity of his line.

The lineage of cheese is demonstrably beyond all record. What did the faun in the beginning of time when a god surprised him or a mortal had the misfortune to come across him in the woods? It is well known that the faun offered either of them cheese. So he knew how to make it.

There are certain bestial men, hangers-on of the Germans,



who would contend that this would prove cheese to be acquired by the Aryan race (or what not) from the Dolichocephalics (or what not), and there are certain horrors who descend to imitate these barbarians—though themselves born in these glorious islands, which are so steep upon their western side. But I will not detain you upon these lest I should fall head foremost into another digression and forget that my article, already in its middle age, is now approaching grey hairs.

At any rate, cheese is very old. It is beyond written language. Whether it is older than butter has been exhaustively discussed by several learned men, to whom I do not send you because the road towards them leads elsewhere. It is the universal opinion of all most accustomed to weigh evidence (and in these I very properly include not only such political hacks as are already upon the bench but sweepingly every single lawyer in Parliament, since any one of them may to-morrow be a judge) that milk is older than cheese, and that man had the use of milk before he cunningly devised the trick of squeezing it in a press and by sacrificing something of its sweetness endowed it with a sort of immortality.

The story of all this has perished. Do not believe any man who professes to give it you. If he tells you some legend of a god who taught the Wheat-eating Race, the Ploughers, and the Lords to make cheese, tell him such tales are true symbols, but symbols only. If he tells you that cheese was an evolution and a development, oh! then!—bring up your guns! Open on the fellow and sweep his intolerable lack of intelligence from the earth. Ask him if he discovers reality to be a function of time, and Being to hide in clockwork. Keep him on the hop with ironical comments upon how it may be that environment can act upon Will, while Will can do nothing with environment—whose proper name is mud. Pester the provincial. Run him off the field.



But about cheese. Its noble antiquity breeds in it a noble diffusion.

This happy Christendom of ours (which is just now suffering from an indigestion and needs a doctor—but having also a complication of insomnia cannot recollect his name) has been multifarious incredibly—but in nothing more than in cheese!

One cheese differs from another, and the difference is in sweeps, and in landscapes, and in provinces, and in countryside, and in climates, and in principalities, and in realms, and in the nature of things. Cheese does most gloriously reflect the multitudinous effect of earthly things, which could not be multitudinous did they not proceed from one mind.

Consider the cheese of Rocquefort: how hard it is in its little box. Consider the cheese of Camembert, which is hard also, and also lives in a little box, but must not be eaten until it is soft and yellow. Consider the cheese of Stilton, which is not made there, and of Cheddar, which is. Then there is your Parmesan, which idiots buy rancid in bottles, but which the wise grate daily for their use: you think it is hard from its birth? You are mistaken. It is the world that hardens the Parmesan. In its youth the Parmesan is very soft and easy, and is voraciously devoured.

Then there is your cheese of Wensleydale, which is made in Wensleydale, and your little Swiss cheese, which is soft and creamy and eaten with sugar, and there is your Cheshire cheese and your little Cornish cheese, whose name escapes me, and your huge round cheese out of the Midlands, as big as a fort whose name I never heard. There is your toasted or Welsh cheese, and your cheese of Pont-l'Évêque, and your white cheese of Brie, which is a chalky sort of cheese. And there is your cheese of Neufchâtel, and there is your Gorgonzola cheese, which is mottled all over like some marbles, or like that Mediterranean soap which is made



of wood-ash and of olive oil. There is your Gloucester cheese called the Double Gloucester, and I have read in a book of Dunlop cheese, which is made in Ayrshire: they could tell you more about it in Kilmarnock. Then Suffolk makes a cheese, but does not give it any name; and talking of that reminds me how going to Le Quesnoy to pass the people there the time of day, and to see what was left of that famous but forgotten fortress, a young man there showed me a cheese, which he told me also had no name, but which was native to the town, and in the valley of Ste Engrace, where is that great wood which shuts off all the world, they make their cheese of ewe's milk and sell it in Tardets, which is their only livelihood. They make a cheese in Port-Salut which is a very subtle cheese, and there is a cheese of Limburg, and I know not how many others, or rather I know them, but you have had enough: for a little cheese goes a long way. No man is a glutton on cheese.

What other cheese has great holes in it like Gruyère, or what other is as round as a cannon-ball like that cheese called Dutch? Which reminds me:

Talking of Dutch cheese. Do you not notice how the intimate mind of Europe is reflected in cheese? For in the centre of Europe, and where Europe is most active, I mean in Britain and in Gaul and in Northern Italy, and in the valley of the Rhine—nay, to some extent in Spain (in her Pyrenean valleys at least)—there flourishes a vast burgeoning of cheese, infinite in variety, one in goodness. But as Europe fades away under the African wound which Spain suffered or the Eastern barbarism of the Elbe, what happens to cheese? It becomes very flat and similar. You can quote six cheeses perhaps which the public power of Christendom has founded outside the limits of its ancient Empire—but not more than six. I will quote you 253 between the Ebro and the Grampians, between Brindisi and the Irish Channel.

I do not write vainly. It is a profound thing.



## The Higher Criticism



I HAVE long desired to make some protest against the attitude which the Very Learned take towards literary evidence. I know that the Very Learned chop and change. I know that they are in this country about fifty years behind the Continent. I know that their devotion to the extraordinary unintelligent German methods will soon be shaken by their discovery that new methods are abroad—in both senses of the word ‘abroad’: for new methods have been abroad, thank Heaven, for a very long time.

But I also know that a mere appeal to reason will be of very little use, so I propose here to give a concrete instance, and I submit it to the judgement of the Very Learned.

The Very Learned when they desire to fix the date or the authenticity or both of a piece of literature, adopt among other postulates, these:

(1) That tradition doesn’t count.

(2) That common sense, one’s general knowledge of the time, and all that multiplex integration which the sane mind effects from a million tiny data to a general judgement, is too tiny to be worthy of their august consideration.

(3) That the title ‘Very Learned’ (which gives them their authority) is tarnished by any form of general knowledge, and can only be acquired by confining oneself to a narrow field in which any fool could become an absolute master in about two years.

These are their negative postulates in dealing with a document.

As to their positive methods, of one hundred insufficient tricks I choose in particular these:

(1) The establishment of the date of the document against tradition and general air, by allusion discovered within it.



(2) The conception that all unusual events recorded in it are mythical, and therefore necessarily anterior to the document.

(3) The supposition that religious emotion, or indeed emotion of any kind, vitiates record.

(4) The use of a single piece of co-relative documentary evidence to destroy that general judgement.

(5) The fixed dogma that most writers of the past have spent most of their time in forging.

Now to test these nincompoops I will consider a contemporary document which I know a good deal about, called *The Path to Rome*. It professes to be the record of a journey by one H. Belloc in the year 1901 from Toul in Lorraine to Rome in Italy. I will suppose that opus to have survived through some accident into a time which preserved few contemporary documents, but which had through tradition and through a knowledge of surrounding circumstance, a popular idea of what the opening of the twentieth century was like, and a pathetic belief that Belloc had taken this journey in the year 1901.

This is how the Very Learned would proceed to teach the vulgar a lesson in scepticism.

'A critical examination of the document has confirmed me in the conclusion that the so-called *Path to Rome* is composed of three distinct elements, which I will call A, W, and 0.' (See my article E.H.R., September 3, 113, pp. 233 *et seq.* for 0. For W, see Furth in *Die Quellen Kritik*, 2nd Semestre, 3117.)

Of these three documents A is certainly much earlier than the rather loose criticism of Polter in England and Bergmann upon the Continent decided some years ago in the *Mono-graph* of the one, and the *Discursions* which the other has incorporated in his *Neo-Catholicism in the Twenty-Second Century*.

The English scholar advances a certain inferior limit of



A.D. 2208, and a doubtful superior limit of A.D. 2236. The German is more precise and fixes the date of A in a year certainly lying between 2211 and 2217. I need not here recapitulate the well-known arguments with which this view is supported. (See Z.M. fs. (Mk. 2) Arch. and the very interesting article of my friend Mr. Gouch in the Pursuits of the A.S.) I may say generally that their argument reposes upon two considerations:

(1) The *Centime*, a coin which is mentioned several times in the book, went out of circulation before the middle of the twenty-first century, as we know from the only extant letter (undoubtedly genuine) of Henri Perro to the Prefect of Aude.

This gives them their superior limit. But it is the Inferior Limit which concerns us most, and here the argument reposes upon one phrase. (Perkins' edition, p. .) This phrase is printed in italics, and runs, '*Deleted by the Censor.*'

It is advanced that we know that a censorship of books was first established in America (where, as I shall show, *The Path to Rome* was written) in the year 2208, and there is ample evidence of the fact that no such institution was in actual existence before the twenty-second century in the English-speaking countries, though there is mention of it elsewhere in the twenty-first, and a fragment of the twentieth appears to allude to something of the kind in Russia at that time. (Baker has confused the Censorship of *Books* with that of *Plays*, and an unknown form of art called 'Morum'; probably a species of private recitation.)

Now Dr. Blick has conclusively shown in his critical edition of the mass of ancient literature, commonly known as *The Statute Book*, that the use of italics is common to distinguish *later* interpolation.

This discovery is here of the first importance. Not only does it destroy the case for the phrase, '*Deleted by the Censor*', as a proof of an Inferior Limit, 2208, but in this particular instance it is conclusive evidence that we have interpolation



here, for it is obvious that *after* the establishment of a Censorship the right would exist to delete a name in the text, and a contemporary Editor would warn the reader in the fashion which he has, as a fact, employed.

So much for the negative argument. We can be certain after Dr. Blick's epoch-making discovery that even the year 2208 is not our Inferior Limit for A, but we have what is much better, conclusive evidence of a much earlier *Superior* Limit, to which I must claim the modest title of discoverer.

There is a passage in A (pp. 170-171) notoriously corrupt, in which a dramatic dialogue between three characters, the Duchess, Major Charles and Clare, is no longer readable. All attempts to reconstitute it have failed, and on that account scholars have too much tended to neglect it.

Now I submit that though the passage is hopelessly corrupt its very corruption affords us a valuable indication.

The Duchess, in a stage indication, is made to address 'Major Charles'. It is notorious that the term 'Major' applied to a certain functionary in a religious body probably affiliated to the Jesuits, known to modern scholars under a title drawn from the only contemporary fragment concerning it, as 'Old Booth's Ramp'. This society was suppressed in America in the year 2012, *and the United States were the last country in which it survived.*

No matter how correct, therefore, the text is in this passage, we may be certain that even the careless scribe took the contemporary existence of a 'major' for granted. And we may be equally certain that even our existing version of A incorporated in the only text we possess, was not written later than the first years of the twenty-first century. We have here, therefore, a new superior limit of capital importance, but, what is even more important, we can fix with fair accuracy a new inferior limit as well.

In the Preface (whose original attachment to A is undoubted) we have the title 'Captain Monologue', p. xii (note



again the word 'Captain', an allusion to 'Booth's Ramp'), and in an anonymous fragment (B.M. m.s.s., 336 N., (60) bearing the title 'Club Gossip', I have found the following conclusive sentence: 'He used to bore us stiff, and old Burton invented a brand new title for him, "Captain Monologue", about a year before he died, which the old chap did an hour or two after dinner on Derby Day.'

Now this phrase is decisive. We have several allusions to 'dinner' (in all, eight, and a doubtful ninth, tabulated by Ziethen in his *Corpus. Ins. Am.*). They all refer to some great public function the exact nature of which is lost, but which undoubtedly held a great place in political life. At what intervals this function occurred we cannot tell, but the coincident allusion to Derby Day settles it.

The only Lord Derby canonized by the Church died in 1960, and the promulgation of Beatification (the earliest date that would permit the use of the word 'day' for this Saint) was issued by Pope Urban XV in May, 2003. It is, therefore, absolutely certain that A was written at some time between the years 2003 to 2012. Nearer than that I do not profess to fix it; but I confess that the allusion (p. 226) to drinking coffee, coupled with the corresponding allusion to drinking coffee in a licence issued for a Lockhart's Restaurant in 2006, inclines me to that precise year as the year in which A appeared, or at any rate was written.

I think in the above I have established the date of A beyond dispute.

I have no case to bring forward of general conclusions, and I know that many scholars will find my argument, however irrefutable, disturbing, for it is universally admitted that excluding the manifestly miraculous episodes of *The Oracle*, *The Ointment of Epinal*, *The View of the Alps over a Hundred Miles*, etc., which are all of them properly referred to in W and θ respectively, A itself contains numerous passages too closely connected with the text to be regarded as additions,



yet manifestly legendary—such as the perpetual allusions to spirits, and in particular to a spirit called ‘Devil’, the inordinate consumption of wine, the gift of tongues, etc., etc. But I submit that a whole century, especially in a time which pullulated with examples of credulity, such as the ‘Flying Men’, ‘The Telephone’, ‘Wireless Telegraphy’, etc., is ample to allow for the growth of these mythical features.

I take it, therefore, as now established, that A in its entirety is not later than 2012 and probably as early as 2006. Upon W I cannot yet profess to have arrived at a decision, but I incline to put it about forty years later, while  $\theta$  (which includes most of the doggerel and is manifestly in another style, and from another hand) is admitted to be at least a generation later than W itself.

In a further paper I shall discuss the much-disputed point of authorship, and I shall attempt to show that Belloc, though the subject of numerous accretions, was a real historical figure, and that the author of A may even have worked upon fragments preserved by oral tradition from the actual conversation of that character.

That is how the damned fools write: and with brains of that standard Germans ask me to deny my God!

THE French have a phrase, 'la beauté du verbe' by which they would express a something in the sound and in the arrangement of words which supplements whatever mere thought those words were intended to express. It is evident that no definition of this beauty can be given, but it is also evident that without it letters would not exist. How it arises we cannot explain, yet the process is familiar to us in everything we do when we are attempting to fulfil an impulse towards whatever is good. An integration not of many small things but of an infinite series of infinitely small things build up the perfect gesture, the perfect line, the perfect intonation, and the perfect phrase. So indeed are all things significant built up: every tone of the voice, every arrangement of landscape or of notes in music which awake us and reveal the things beyond. But when one says that this is especially true of perfect expression one means that sometimes, rarely, the integration achieves a steadfast and sufficient formula. The mind is satisfied rather than replete. It asks no more; and if it desires to enjoy further the pleasure such completion has given it, it does not attempt to prolong or to develop the pleasure under which it has leapt; it is content to wait a while and to return, knowing well that it has here a treasure laid up for ever.

All this may be expressed in two words: the Classical Spirit. That is Classic of which it is true that the enjoyment is sufficient when it is terminated and that in the enjoyment of it an entity is revealed.

When men propose to bequeath to their fellows work of so supreme a kind it is to be noticed that they choose by instinct a certain material.

It has been said that the material in which he works affects



the achievement of the artist: it is truer to say that it helps him. A man designing a sculpture in marble knows very well what he is about to do. A man attempting the exact and restrained rendering of tragedy upon the stage does not choose the stage as one among many methods, he is drawn to it: he needs it; the audience, the light, the evening, the very slope of the boards, all minister to his efforts. And so a man determined to produce the greatest things in verse takes up by nature exact and thoughtful words and finds that their rhythm, their combination, and their sound turn under his hand to something greater than he himself at first intended; he becomes a creator, and his name is linked with the name of a masterpiece. The material in which he has worked is hard; the price he has paid is an exceeding effect; the reward he has earned is permanence.

José de Heredia was an artist of this kind. The mass of the verse he produced, or rather published, was small. It might have been very large. It is not (as a foolish modern affectation will sometimes pretend) necessary to the endurance or even the excellence of work that it should be the product of exceptional moments; nor is it even true (as the wise Ancients believed) that great length of time must always mature it. But the small volume of Heredia's legacy to European letters does argue this at least in the poet, that he passionately loved perfection and that, finding himself able to achieve it (for perfection can be achieved) but now and then, he chose only to be remembered by the contentment which, now and then, his own genius had given him.

He worked upon verse as men work upon the harder metals; all that he did was chiselled very finely, then sawn to an exact configuration and at last inlaid, for when he published his completed volume it is true to say that every piece fitted in with the sound of one before and of one after. He was careful in the heroic degree.

His blood and descent are worthy of notice. He was a



Spaniard, inheriting from the first Conquerors of the New World, nor was it remarkable to those who have received a proper enthusiasm for the classical spirit that the energy and even the violence natural to such a lineage should express themselves in the coldest and the most exalted form when, for the second time, a member of the family attempted verse. It is in the essence of that spirit that it alone can dare to be disciplined. It never doubts the motive power that will impel it; it is afraid, if anything, of an excess of power, and consciously imposes upon itself the limits which give it form.

Heredia in his person expressed the activity which impelled him, for he was strong, brown, erect, a rapid walker, and a man whose voice was perpetually modulated in resonant and powerful tones. In his last years during his administration of the Library at the Arsenal this vitality of his took on an aspect of good nature very charming and very fruitful. His organization of the place was thorough, his knowledge of the readers intimate. He refused the manuscripts of none, he advised, laughed, and consoled. His criticism was sure. Several, notably Marcel Prévost, were launched by his authority. The same deep security of literary judgement which had permitted him to chastise and to perfect his impeccable sonnets into their final form permitted him also to hold up before his eyes, grasp, and judge the work of every other man.

His frailty, as must always be the frailty of such men, was fastidiousness. The same sensitive consciousness which is said to have all but lost us the *Aeneid*, and which certainly all but lost us the *Apologia*, dominated his otherwise vigorous soul. It is more than forty years since his first verse, written just upon achieving his majority, appeared in the old *Revue de Paris* and in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It was not till 1893 that he collected in one volume the scattered sonnets of his youth and middle age: the collection won him somewhat tardily his chair in the Academy. There is irony in the



reminiscence that the man he defeated in that election was Zola.

All the great men who saluted his advent are dead. Théophile Gautier, who first established his fame; Hugo, who addressed to him, perhaps, that vigorous appeal in which strict labour is deified, and the medal and the marble bust are shown to outlive the greatest glories, are sometimes quoted as the last among the great French writers.

The immediate future will show that the stream of French excellence in this department, as in any other of human activity, is full, deep, and steady. The work of Heredia will help to prove it. He was a Spaniard, and a Colonial Spaniard. No other nation, perhaps, except the modern French, so inherit the romantic appetite of the later Roman Empire as to be able to mould and absorb every exterior element of excellence. It is remarkable that at the same moment Paris contemplated the funeral of the Italian de Brazza and the death of the Cuban Heredia. It is probable that those of us who are still young will live to see either name at the head of a new tradition. Heredia proved it possible not so much to imitate as to recapture the secure tradition of an older time. Perhaps the truest generalization that can be made with regard to the French people is to say that they especially in Western Europe (whose quality it is ever to transform itself but never to die) discover new springs of vitality after every period of defeat and aridity which they are compelled to cross. Heredia will prove in the near future a capital example of this power. He will increase silently in reputation until we, in old age, shall be surprised to find our sons and grandsons taking him for granted and speaking of him as one speaks of the *Majores*, of the permanent lights of poetry.



## The Great Sight



ALL night we had slept on straw in a high barn. The wood of its beams was very old, and the tiles upon the roof were green with age; but there hung from beam to beam, fantastically, a wire caught by nails, and here and there from this wire hung an electric-light bulb. It was a symbol of the time, and the place, and the people. There was no local by-law to forbid such a thing, or if there was, no one dreamt of obeying it.

Just in the first dawn of that September day we went out, my companion and I, at guess-work to hunt in the most amusing kind of hunting, which is the hunting of an army. The lane led through one of those lovely ravines of Picardy which travellers never know (for they only see the plains), and in a little while we thought it wise to strike up the steep bank from the valley on to the bare plateau above, but it was all at random and all guess-work, only we wisely thought that we were nearing the beginning of things, and that on the bare fields of the high flat we should have a greater horizon and a better chance of catching any indications of men or arms.

When we had reached the height the sun had long risen, but it as yet gave no shining and there were no shadows, for a delicate mist hung all about the landscape, though immediately above us the sky was faintly blue.

It was the weirdest of sensations to go for mile after mile over that vast plain, to know that it was cut in regular series by parallel ravines which in all that extended view we could not guess at; to see up to the limits of the plateau the spires of villages and the groups of trees about them, and to know that somewhere in all this there lay concealed a *corps d'armée*—and not to see or hear a soul. The only human being that



we saw was a man driving a heavy farm-cart very slowly up a side-way just as we came into the great road which has shot dead across this country in one line ever since the Romans built it. As we went along that road, leaving the fields, we passed by many men indeed, and many houses, all in movement with the early morning; and the chalked numbers on the doors, and here and there an empty tin of polishing-paste or an order scrawled on paper and tacked to a wall betrayed the passage of soldiers. But of the army there was nothing at all. Scouting on foot (for that was what it was) is a desperate business, and that especially if you have nothing to tell you whether you will get in touch in five, or ten, or twenty miles.

It was nine o'clock before a clatter of horse-hoofs came up the road behind us. At first my companion and I wondered whether it were the first riders of the Dragoons or Cuirassiers. In that case the advance was from behind us. But very soon, as the sound grew clearer, we heard how few they were, and then there came into view, trotting rapidly, a small escort and two officers with the umpires' badges, so there was nothing doing; but when, half a mile ahead of us on the road, they turned off to the left over plough, we knew that that was the way we must follow too. Before we came to the turning-place, before we left the road to take the fields on the left, there came from far off and on our right the sound of a gun.

It was my companion who heard it first. We strained to hear it again; twice we thought we had caught it, and then again twice we doubted. It is not so easily recognizable a sound as you might think in those great plains cut by islands of high trees and steading walls. The little '75' gun lying low makes a different sound altogether at a distance from the old piece of '90'. At any rate there was here no doubt that there were guns to the right and in front of us, and the umpire had gone to the left. We were getting towards the



thick, and we had only to go straight on to find out where the front was.

Just as we had so decided and were still pursuing the high road, there came, not half a mile away and again to our right, in a valley below us, that curious sound which is like nothing at all unless it be dumping of flints out of a cart: rifle fire. It cracked and tore in stretches. Then there were little gaps of silence like the gaps in signalling, and then it cracked and tore in stretches again; and then, fitfully, one individual shot and then another would be heard; and, much farther off, with little sounds like snaps, the replies began from the hill-side beyond the stream. So far so good. Here was contact in the valley below us, and the guns, some way behind and far off northwards, had opened. So we got the hang of it instantly—the front was a sort of a crescent lying roughly north and south, and roughly parallel to the great road, and the real or feigned mass of the advance was on the extreme left of that front. We were in it now, and that anxious and wearing business in all hunting, finding, was over; but we had been on foot six mortal hours before coming across our luck, and more than half the soldiers' day was over. These men had been afoot since three, and certain units on the left had already marched over twenty miles.

After that coming in touch with our business, not only did everything become plain, but the numbers we met, and what I have called 'the thick of things', fed us with interest. We passed half the 38th, going down the road singing, to extend the line, and in a large village we came to the other half, slouching about in the traditional fashion of the Service; they had been waiting for an hour. With them, and lined up all along the village street, was one battery, with the drivers dismounted, and all that body were at ease. There were men sitting on the doorsteps of the houses and men trotting to the canteen-wagon or to the village shops to buy food; and there were men reading papers which a pedlar had brought



round. Mud and dust had splashed them all; upon some there was a look of great fatigue; they were of all shapes and sizes, and altogether it was the sort of sight you would not see in any other service in the world. It was the sort of sight which so disgusted the Emperor Joseph when he made his little tour to spy out the land before the Revolutionary Wars. It was the sort of sight which made Massenbach before Grandpré marvel whether the French forces were soldiers at all, and the sort of sight which made Valmy inexplicable to the King of Prussia and his staff. It was the sort of sight which eighteen months later still convinced Mack in Tournai that the Duke of York's plan was a plan 'of annihilation'. It is a trap for judgement is the French service.

So they lounged about and bought bread, and shifted their packs, and so the drivers stood by their horses, and so they all waited and slouched, until there came, not a man with a bugle nor anything with the slightest savour of drama but a little fellow running along thumping in his loose leather leggings, who went up to a Major of Artillery and saluted, and immediately afterwards the Major put his hand up, and then down a village street, from a point which we could not see came a whistle, and the whole of that mass of men began to swarm. The grey-blue coats of the line swung round the corner of the village street; they had yet a few miles before them. Anything more rapid or less in step it would be difficult to conceive. The guns were off at a right angle down the main road, making a prodigious clatter, and at the same time appeared two parties, one of which it was easy to understand, the other not. They were both parties of sappers. The one party had a great roll of wire on a drum, and as quick as you could think they were unreeling it, and as they unreeled it fastening it to eaves, overhanging branches, and to corners of walls, stretching it out forward. It was the field-telephone. The other party came along



carrying great beams upon their shoulders, but what they were to do with these beams we did not know.

We followed the tail of the line down into the valley, and all that morning long and past the food time at midday, and so till the sun declined in the afternoon, we went with the 38th in its gradual success from crest to crest. And still the 38th slouched by companies, and mile after mile with checks and halts, and it never seemed to get either less or more tired. The men had had twelve hours of it when they came at last, and we after them, on to the critical position. They had carried (together with all the line to left and to the right of them) a string of villages which crowned the crest of a farther plateau, and over this farther plateau they were advancing against the main body of the resistance—the other army corps which was set up against ours, to simulate an enemy.

A railway line ran here across the rolling hedgeless fields, and just at the point where my companion and I struck it there was a dip in the land and a high embankment which hid the plain beyond; but from that plain beyond one heard the separate fire of the advancing line in its scattered order. We climbed the embankment, and from its ridge we saw over two miles or more of stubble, the little creeping bunches of the attack. What was resisting, or where it lay, one could only guess. Some hundreds of yards before us to the east, with the sloping sun full on it, a line of thicket, one scattered wood and then another, an imperceptible lifting of the earth here and there marked the opposing firing line. Two pom-poms could be spotted exactly, for the flashes were clear through the underwood. And still the tide of the advance continued to flow, and the little groups came up and fed it, one after another and another, in the centre where we were, and far away to the north and right away to the south the countryside was alive with it. The action was beginning to take on something of that final movement and decision



which makes the climax of manœuvres look so great a game. But in a little while that general creeping forward was checked: there were orders coming from the umpires, and a sort of lull fell over each position held. My companion said to me:

‘Let us go forward now over the intervening zone and in among Picquart’s men, and get well behind their line, and see whether there is a rally or whether before the end of this day they begin to fall back again.’

So we did, walking a mile or so until we had long passed their outposts and were behind their forward lines. And standing there, upon a little eminence near a wood, we turned and looked over what we had come, westward towards the sun which was now not far from its setting.

Then it was that we saw the last of the Great Sight.

The level light, mellow and already reddening, illumined all that plain strangely, and with the absolute stillness of the air contrasted the opening of the guns which had been brought up to support the renewal of the attack. We saw the isolated woods standing up like islands with low steep cliffs, dotted in a sea of stubble for miles and miles, and first from the cover of one and then from another the advance perpetually piercing and deploying. As we so watched there buzzed high above us, like a great hornet, a biplane, circling well within our lines, beyond attack from the advance, but overlooking all they concealed behind it. In a few minutes a great Blériot monoplane like a hawk followed, yet farther inwards. The two great birds shot round in an arc, parallel to the firing line, and well behind it, and in a few minutes, that seemed seconds, they were dots to the south and then lost in the air. And perpetually, as the sun declined, Picquart’s men were falling back north and south of us and before us, and the advance continued. Group by group we saw it piercing this hedge, that woodland, now occupying a nearer and a nearer roll of land. It

was the greatest thing imaginable: this enormous sweep of men, the dead silence of the air, and the comparatively slight contrast of the ceaseless pattering rifle fire and the slight intermittent accompaniment of the advancing batteries; until the sun set and all this human business slackened. Then for the first time one heard bugles, which were a command to cease the game.

I would not have missed that day nor lose the memories of it for anything in the world.



## On Inns



HERE am I sitting in an Inn, having gloomily believed not half an hour ago that Inns were doomed with all other good things, but now more hopeful and catching avenues of escape through the encircling decay.

For though certainly that very subtle and final expression of a good nation's life, the Inn, is in peril, yet possibly it may survive.

This Inn which surrounds me as I write (the law forbids me to tell its name) is of the noblest in South England, and it is in South England that the chief Inns of the world still stand. In the hall of it, as you come in, are barrels of cider standing upon chairs. The woman that keeps this Inn is real and kind. She receives you so that you are glad to enter the house. She takes pleasure in her life. What was her beauty her daughter now inherits, and she serves at the bar. Her son is strong and carries up the luggage. The whole place is a paradise, and as one enters that hall one stands hesitating whether to enjoy its full, yet remaining delight, or to consider the peril of death that hangs to-day over all good things.

Consider, you wanderers (that is all men, whatsoever, for not one of you can rest), what an Inn is, and see if it should not rightly raise both great fears and great affection.

An Inn is of the nation that made it. If you desire a proof that the unity of Christendom is not to be achieved save through a dozen varying nations, each of a hundred varying counties and provinces and these each of several countryside—the Inns will furnish you with that proof.

If any foolish man pretend in your presence that the brotherhood of men should make a decent man cosmopolitan, reprove his error by the example of an Inn.



If anyone is so vile as to maintain in your presence that one's country should not be loved and loyally defended, confound so horrid a fool by the very vigorous picture of an Inn. And if he impudently says that some damned Babylon or other is better than an Inn, look up his ancestry.

For the truth is that Inns (may God preserve them, and of the few remaining breed, in spite of peril, a host of new Inns for our sons), Inns, Inns are the mirror and at the same time the flower of a people. The savour of men met in kindliness and in a homely way for years and years comes to inhabit all their panels (Inns are panelled) and lends incense to their fires. (Inns have not radiators, but fires.) But this good quintessence and distillation of comradeship varies from countryside to countryside and more from province to province, and more still from race to race and from realm to realm; just as speech differs and music and all the other excellent fruits of Europe.

Thus there is an Inn at Tout-de-suite-Tardets which the Basques made for themselves and offer to those who visit their delightful streams. A river flows under its balcony, tinkling along a sheer stone wall, and before it, high against the sunset, is a wood called Tiger Wood, clothing a rocky peak called the Peak of Eagles.

Now no one could have built that Inn nor endowed it with its admirable spirit, save the cleanly but incomprehensible *Basques*. There is no such Inn in the Bearnese country, nor any among the Gascons.

In Falaise the Normans very slowly and by a mellow process of some thousand years have engendered an Inn. This Inn, I think, is so good that you will with difficulty compare it with any better thing. It is as quiet as a tree on a summer night, and cooks crayfish in an admirable way. Yet could not these *Normans* have built that *Basque* Inn; and a man that would merge one in the other and so drown both is an outlaw and to be treated as such.



But these Inns of South England (such as still stand!)—what can be said in proper praise of them which shall give their smell and colour and their souls? There is nothing like them in Europe, nor anything to set above them in all the world. It is within their walls and at their boards that one knows what South England once did in the world and why. If it is gone it is gone. All things die at last. But if it *is* gone—why, no lover of it need remain to drag his time out in mourning it. If South England is dead it is better to die upon its grave.

Whether it dies in our time or no you may test by the test of its *Inns*. If they may not weather the chaos, if they fail to round the point that menaces our religion and our very food, our humour and our prime affections—why, then, South England has gone too. If, if (I hardly dare to write such a challenge), if the Inns hold out a little time longer—why, then, South England will have turned the corner and Europe can breathe again. Never mind her extravagances, her follies or her sins. Next time you see her from a hill, pray for South England. For if she dies, you die. And as a symptom of her malady (some would say of her death-throes) carefully watch her Inns.

Of the enemies of Inns, as of rich men, dull men, blind men, weak-stomached men and men false to themselves, I do not speak: but of their effect. Why such blighting men are nowadays so powerful and why God has given them a brief moment of pride it is not for us to know. It is hidden among the secret things of this life. But that they *are* powerful all men, lovers of Inns, that is, lovers of right living, know well enough and bitterly deplore. The effect of their power concerns us. It is like a wasting of our own flesh, a whitening of our own blood.

Thus there is the destruction of an Inn by gluttony of an evil sort—though to say so sounds absurd, for one would imagine that gluttony should be proper to Inns. And so it



is, when it is your true gluttony of old, the gluttony of our fathers made famous in English letters by the song which begins:

I am not a glutton  
But I do like pie.

But evil gluttony, which may also be called the gluttony of devils, is another matter. It flies to liquor as to a drug; it is ashamed of itself; it swallows a glass behind a screen and hides. There is no companionship with it. It is an abomination, and this abomination has the power to destroy a Christian Inn and to substitute for it, first a gin-palace, and then, in reaction against that, the very horrible house where they sell only tea and coffee and bubbly waters that bite and sting both in the mouth and in the stomach. These places are hotbeds of despair, and suicides have passed their last hours on earth consuming slops therein alone.

Thus, again, a sad enemy of Inns is luxury. The rich will have their special habitations in a town so cut off from ordinary human beings that no Inn may be built in their neighbourhood. In which connexion I greatly praise that little colony of the rich which is settled on the western side of Berkeley Square, in Lansdowne House, and all around the eastern parts of Charles Street, for they have permitted to be established in their midst the 'Running Footman', and this will count in the scale when their detestable vices are weighed upon the Day of Judgement, upon which day, you must know, vices are not put into the scale gently and carefully so as to give you fair measure, but are banged down with enormous force by strong and maleficent demons.

Then, again, a very subtle enemy of Inns is poverty, when it is pushed to inhuman limits, and you will note especially in the dreadful great towns of the North, more than one ancient house which was once honourable and where Mr. Pickwick might very well have stayed, now turned



ramshackle and dilapidated and abandoned, slattern, draggle-tail, a blotch, until the yet beastlier reformers come and pull it down to make an open space wherein the stunted children may play.

Thus, again, you will have the pulling down of an Inn and the setting up of an Hotel built of iron and mud, or ferro-concrete. This is murder.

Let me not be misunderstood. Many an honest Inn calls itself an hotel. I have no quarrel with that, nor has any traveller I think. It is a title. Some few blighted and accursed hotels call themselves 'Inns'—a foul snobbism, a nasty trick of words pretending to create realities.

No, it is when the thing is really done, not when the name is changed, that murder calls out to God for vengeance.

I knew an Inn in South England, when I was a boy, that stood on the fringe of a larch wood, upon a great high road. Here when the springtime came and I went off to see the world I used to meet with carters and with travelling men, also keepers and men who bred horses and sold them, and sometimes with sailors padding the hoof between port and port. These men would tell me a thousand things. The larch trees were pleasant in their new colour; the woods alive with birds and the great high road was, in those days, deserted for high bicycles were very rare, low bicycles were not invented, the rich went by train in those days; only carts and caravans and men with horses used the leisurely surface of the way.

Now that good Inn has gone. I was in it some five years ago, marvelling that it had changed so little, though motor things and money-changers went howling by in a stream and though there were now no poachers or gipsies or forest-men to speak to, when a too smart young man came in with two assistants and they began measuring, calculating, two-foot-ruling and jotting. This was the plot. Next came the deed. For in another year, when the spring burst and I

passed by, what should I see in the place of my Inn, my Inn of youth, my Inn of memories, my Inn of trees, but a damnable stack of iron with men fitting a thin shell of bricks to it like a skin. Next year the monster was alive and made. The old name (call it the Jolly) was flaunting on a vulgar sign-board swing in cast-iron tracing to imitate forged work. The shell of bricks was cast with sham white as for half-timber work. The sham-white was patterned with sham timbers of baltic deal, stained dark, with pins of wood stuck in: like Cheshire, not like home. Wrong lattice insulted the windows—and inside there were three bars. At the door stood an Evil Spirit, and within every room upstairs and down other devils, his servants, resided.

It is no light thing that such things should be done and that we cannot prevent them.

From the towns all Inns have been driven: from the villages most. No conscious efforts, no Bond Street nastiness of false conservation, will save the beloved roofs. Change your hearts or you will lose your Inns and you will deserve to have lost them. But when you have lost your Inns drown your empty selves, for you will have lost the last of England.



## The Ebro Plain

I WISH I could put before men who have not seen that sight, the abrupt shock which the Northern eye receives when it first looks from some rampart of the Pyrenees upon the new deserts of Spain.

'Deserts' is a term at once too violent and too simple. The effect of that amazement is by no means the effect which follows from a similar vision of the Sahara from the red-burnt and precipitous rocks of Atlas; nor is it the effect which those stretches of white blinding sand give forth when, looking southward towards Mexico and the sun, a man shades his eyes to catch a distant mark of human habitation along some rare river of Arizona from the cliff edge of a cut table-land.

Corn grows in that new Spain beneath one: many towns stand founded there; Christian churches are established; a human society stands firmly, though sparsely, set in that broad waste of land. But to the Northern eye first seeing it—nay, to a Northerner well acquainted with it, but returning to the renewal of so strange a vision—it is always a renewed perplexity how corn, how men, how worship, how society (as he has known them) can have found a place there; and that, although he knows that nowhere in Europe have the fundamental things of Europe been fought for harder and more steadfastly maintained than they have along this naked and burnt valley of the Ebro.

I will suppose the traveller to have made his way on foot from the boundaries of the Basque country, from the Peak of Anie, down through the high Pyrenean silences to those banks of Aragon where the river runs west between parallel ranges, each of which is a bastion of the main Pyrenean chain. I will suppose him to have crossed that roll of thick



mud which the tumbling Aragon is in all these lower reaches, to have climbed the farther range (which is called 'The Mountains of Stone', or 'The Mountains of the Rock'), and, coming upon its farther southern slope, to see for the first time spread before him that vast extent of uniform dead-brown stretching through an air metallicity clear to the tiny peaks far off on the horizon, which mark the springs of the Tagus. It is a characteristic of the stretched Spanish upland, from within sight of the Pyrenees to within sight of the Southern Sea, that it may thus be grasped in less than half a dozen views, wider than any views in Europe; and, partly from the height of that interior land, partly from the Iberian aridity of its earth, these views are as sharp in detail, as inhuman in their lack of distant veils and blues, as might be the landscapes of a dead world.

The traveller who should so have passed the high ridge and watershed of the Pyrenees, would have come down from the snows of the Anie through forests not indeed as plentiful as those of the French side, but still dignified by many and noble trees, and alive with cascading water. While he was yet crossing the awful barriers (one standing out parallel before the next) which guard the mountains on their Spainward fall, he would continuously have perceived, though set in dry, unhospitable soil, bushes and clumps of trees; something at times resembling his own Northern conception of pasture-land. The herbage upon which he would pitch his camp, the branches he would pick for firewood, still, though sparse and Southern, would have reminded him of home.

But when he has come over the farthest of these parallel reaches, and sees at last the whole sweep of the Ebro country spread out before him, it is no longer so. His eye detects no trees, save that belt of green which accompanies the course of the river, no glint of water. Though human habitation is present in that landscape, it mixes, as it were, with the mud



and the dust of the earth from which it rose; and, gazing at a distant clump in the plains beneath him, far off, the traveller asks himself doubtfully whether these hummocks are but small, abrupt, insignificant hills or a nest of the houses of men—things with histories.

For the rest all that immeasurable sweep of yellow-brown bare earth fills up whatever is not sky, and is contained or framed upon its final limit by mountains as severe as its own empty surface. Those far and dreadful hills are unrelieved by crag or wood or mist; they are a mere height, naked and unfruitful, running along wall-like and cutting off Aragon from the south and the old from the new Castille, save where the higher knot of the Moncayo stands tragic and enormous against the sky.

This experience of Spain, this first discovery of a thing so unexpected and so universally misstated by the pens of travellers and historians, is best seen in autumn sunsets, I think, when behind the mass of the distant mountains an angry sky lights up its unfruitful aspect of desolation, and, though lending it a colour it can never possess in commoner hours and seasons, in no way creates an illusion of fertility or of romance, of yield or of adventure, in that doomed silence.

The vision of which I speak does not, I know, convey this peculiar impression even to all of the few who may have seen it thus—and they are rare. They are rare because men do not now approach the old places of Europe in the old way. They come into a Spanish town of the north by those insufficient railways of our time. They return back home with no possession of great sights, no more memorable experience than of urban things done less natively, more awkwardly, more slowly than in England. Yet even those few, I say, who enter Spain from the north, as Spain should be entered—over the mountain roads—have not all of them received the impression of which I speak.

I have so received it, I know; I could wish that to the



Northerner it were the impression most commonly conveyed: a marvel that men should live in such a place: a wonder when the ear catches the sound of a distant bell, that ritual and a creed should have survived there—so absolute is its message of desolation.

With a more familiar acquaintance this impression does not diminish, but increases. Especially to one who shall make his way painfully on foot for three long days from the mountains to the mountains again, who shall toil over the great bare plain, who shall cross by some bridge over Ebro and look down, it may be, at a trickle of water hardly moving in the midst of a broad, stony bed, or it may be at a turbid spate roaring a furlong broad after the rains—in either case unusable and utterly unfriendly to man; who shall hobble from little village to little village, despairing at the silence of men in that silent land and at their lack of smiles and at the something fixed which watches one from every wall; who shall push on over the slight wheel-tracks which pass for roads—they are not roads—across the infinite, unmarked, undifferentenced field; to one who has done all these things, I say, getting the land into his senses hourly, there comes an appreciation of its wilful silence and of its unaccomplished soul. That knowledge fascinates, and bids him return. It is like watching with the sick who once were thought dead, who are, in your night of watching, upon the turn of their evil. It is like those hours of the night in which the mind of some troubled sleeper awakened can find neither repose nor variety, but only a perpetual return upon itself—yet waits for dawn. There lies behind all this, as behind a veil of dryness stretched from the hills to the hills, for those who will discover it, the intense, the rich, the unconquerable spirit of Spain.



## The Monkey Question: An Appeal to Common Sense

A PRIVILEGED body slips so easily into regarding its privileges as common rights that I fear the plea which the SIMIAN LEAGUE repeats in this pamphlet will still sound strange in the ears of many, though the work of the League has been increasingly successful and has reached yearly a wider circle of the educated public since its foundation by Lady Wayne in 1902. We desire to place before our fellow citizens the claims of Monkeys, and we hope once more that nothing we say may seem extreme or violent, for we know full well what poor weapons violence and passion are in the debate of a practical political matter.

Perhaps it is best to begin by pointing out how rarely even the best of us pause in our fevered race for wealth to consider the disabilities of any of our fellow-creatures: when that truth is grasped it will be easier to plead the special cause of the Simian.

Were English men and women to realize the wrongs of the Race, or at any rate the illogical and therefore unjust position in which we have placed them; were the just and thoughtful men, the refined and golden-hearted ladies who are ready in this country to support every good cause when it is properly presented; were *they* to realize the disabilities of the Monkey, I do not say as vividly as they realize the tragedies and misfortunes of London life, they could not, I think, avoid an ill-ease, a pricking of conscience, which would lead at last to some hearty and English effort for the relief of the cousin and forerunner of man.

The attitude adopted towards Monkeys by the mass of those who, after all, live in the same world, and have much the same appetites and necessities and sufferings as they, is an attitude I am persuaded, not of heartlessness, but of



ignorance. To disturb that ignorance, and in some to awake a consciousness which, perhaps, they fear, is not a grateful task, but it is our duty, and we will pursue it.

Let the reader consider for one moment the aspect not only of formal law but of the whole community, and of what is called 'public opinion' towards this section of sentient beings.

As things now are—aye! and have been for centuries in this green England of ours—a Monkey may not marry; he may not own land; he may not fill any salaried post under the Crown. The Papists themselves are debarred from no honour (outside Ireland) save the Lord Chancellorship. Monkeys, who are responsible for no persecutions in the past, whose religion presents no insult or outrage to our common reason, and who differ little from ourselves in their general practice of life and thought, *are debarred from all!*

A Monkey may not be a Member of Parliament, a Civil Servant, an officer in either Service, no, not even in the Territorial Army. It is doubtful whether he may hold a commission for the peace. True, there is no statute upon the subject, and the rural magistracy is perhaps the freest and most open of all our offices, and the least restricted by artificial barriers of examination or test; nevertheless, it is the considered opinion of the best legal authorities that no Monkey could sit upon the Bench, and in any case the discussion is purely academic, for it is difficult to believe that any Lord-Lieutenant, under the ridiculous anachronism of our present Constitution, would nominate a Monkey to such a position—unless (which is by law impossible) he should be heir to an owner of an estate in land.

Nor is this all. The mention of unpaid posts recalls the damning truth that all honorary positions in the Diplomatic Service, including even the purely formal stage in the Foreign Office, are closed to the Monkey; the very Court sinecures, which admittedly require no talents, are denied to our



Simian fellow-creatures, if not by law at least by custom and in practice.

There have been employed by the League in the British Museum the services of two ladies who feel most keenly upon this subject. They are (to the honour of their sex) as amply qualified as any person in this kingdom for the task which they have undertaken, and they report to the Executive Commission after two months of minute research that (with one doubtful exception occurring during the reign of Her late Majesty) no Monkey has held any position whatever at Court.

All judicial positions are equally inaccessible to them; for though, perhaps, in theory a Monkey could be promoted to the Bench if he had served his party sufficiently long and faithfully in the House of Commons (to which body he is admissible—at least I can find no rule or custom, let alone a statute, against it), yet he is cut off from such an ambition at the very outset by his inadmissibility to a legal career. The Inns of Court are monopolist, and, like all monopolists, hopelessly conservative. They have admitted first one class and then another—though reluctantly—to their privileges, but it will be twenty or thirty years at least before they will give way in the matter of Monkeys. To be a physician, a solicitor, an engineer, or a Commissioner for Oaths is denied them as effectually as though they did not exist. Indeed, no occupation is left them save that of manual labour, and on this I would say a word. It is fashionable to jeer at the Monkey's disinclination to sustained physical effort and to concentrated toil; but it is remarkable that those who affect such a contempt for the Monkey's powers are the first to deny him access to the liberal professions in which they know (though they dare not confess it) he would be a serious rival to the European. As it is, in the few places open to Monkeys—the somewhat parasitical domestic occupation of 'companions' and the more manly, but still humiliating, task of



acting as assistants to organ-grinders, the Monkey has won universal if grudging praise.

Latterly, since progress cannot be indefinitely delayed, the Monkey has indeed advanced by one poor step towards the civic equality which is his right, and has appeared as an actor upon the boards of our music-halls. It should surely be a sufficient rebuke for those who continue to sneer at the Simian League and such devoted pioneers as Miss Greeley and Lady Wayne that the Monkey has been honourably admitted and has done first-rate work in a profession which His late Gracious Majesty and His late Majesty's late revered mother, Queen Victoria, have seen fit to honour by the bestowal of knighthoods, and in one case (where the recipient was childless) of a baronetcy.

The disabilities I have enumerated are by no means exhaustive. A Monkey may not sign or deliver a deed; he may not serve on a jury; he may be ill-treated, forsooth, and even killed by some cruel master, and the law will refuse to protect him or to punish his oppressor. He may be subjected to all the by-laws of a tyrannical or fanatical administration, but in preventing such abuses he has no voice. He may not enter our older Universities, at least as the member of a college; that is, he can only take a degree at Oxford or Cambridge under the implied and wholly unmerited stigma applying to the non-collegiate student. And these iniquities apply not only to the great anthropoids whose strength and grossness we might legitimately fear, but to the most delicately organized types—to the Barbary Ape, the Lemur, and the Ring-tailed Baboon. Finally—and this is the worst feature in the whole matter—a Monkey, by a legal fiction at least as old as the fourteenth century, is not a person in the eye of the law.

We call England a free country, yet at the present day and as you read these lines, *any Monkey found at large may be summarily arrested*. He has no remedy; no action for assault



will lie. He is not even allowed to call witnesses in his own defence, or to establish an alibi.

It may be pleaded that these disabilities attach also to the Irish, but we must remember that the Irish are allowed a certain though modified freedom of the Press, and have extended to them the incalculable advantage of sending representatives to Westminster. The Monkey has no such remedies. He may be incarcerated, nay *chained*, yet he cannot sue out a writ for habeas corpus any more than can a British subject in time of war, and worst of all, through the connivance or impotence of the police, cases have been brought forward *and approved* in which Monkeys have been openly bought and sold!

We boast our sense of delicacy, and perhaps rightly, in view of our superiority over other nations in this particular; yet we permit the Monkey to exhibit revolting nakedness, and we hardly heed the omission! It is true that some Monkeys are covered from time to time with little blue coats. A cap is occasionally disdainfully permitted them, and not infrequently they are permitted a pair of leather breeches, through a hole in which the tail is permitted to protrude; but no reasonable man will deny that these garments are regarded in the light of mere ornaments, and rarely fulfil those functions which every decent Englishman requires of clothing.

And now we come to the most important section of our appeal. *What can be done?*

We are a kindly people and we are a just people, but we are also a very conservative people. The fate of all pioneers besets those who attempt to move in this matter. They are jeered at, or, what is worse, neglected. One of the most prominent of the League's workers has been certified a lunatic by an authority whose bitter prejudice is well known, and against whom we have as yet had no grant of a *mandamus*, and we have all noticed the quiet contempt, the sort of organized boycott or conspiracy of silence with which a



company at dinner will receive the subject when it is brought forward.

There are also to be met the violent prejudices with which the mass of the population is still filled in this regard. These prejudices are, of course, more common among the uneducated poor than in the upper classes, who in various relations come more often in contact with Monkeys, and who also have a wider and more tolerant, because a better cultivated, spirit. But the prejudice is discernible in every class of society, even in the very highest. We have also arrayed against us in our crusade for right and justice the dying but still formidable power of clericalism. Society is but half emancipated from its medieval trammels, and the priest, that Eternal Enemy of Liberty, can still put in his evil word against the rights of the Simian.

Let us not despair! We can hope for nothing, it is true, until we have effected a profound change in public opinion, and that change cannot be effected by laws. It can only be brought about by a slow and almost imperceptible effort, unsleeping, tireless, and convinced: something of the same sort as has destroyed the power of militarism upon the continent of Europe; something of the same sort as has scotched landlordism at home; something of the same sort as has freed the unhappy natives of the Congo from the misrule of depraved foreigners; something of the same sort as has produced the great wave in favour of temperance through the length and breadth of this land.

We must not attempt extremes or demand full justice to the exclusion of excellent half-measures. No one condemns more strongly than do we the militant pro-Simians who have twice assaulted and once blinded for life a keeper in the Zoological Gardens. We do not even approve of those ardent but in our opinion misguided spirits of the Simian Freedom Society who publish side by side the photographs of Pongo the learned Ape from the Gaboons and that of a



certain Cabinet Minister, accompanied by the legend 'Which is Which?' It is not by actions of this kind that we shall win the good fight; but rather by a perseverance in reason combined with courtesy shall we attain our end, until at long last our Brother shall be free! As for the excellent but somewhat provincial reactionaries who still object to us that the Monkey differs fundamentally from the human race; that he is not possessed of human speech, and so forth, we can afford to smile at their waning authority. Modern science has sufficiently dealt with them; and if anyone bring out against the Monkey the obscurantist insult that His Hide is Covered with Hair, we can at once point to innumerable human beings, fully recognized and endowed with civic rights, who, were they carefully examined, would prove in no better case. As to speech, the Monkey communicates in his own way as well or better than do we, and for that matter, if speech is to be the criterion, are we to deny civic rights to the Dumb?

We have it upon the authority of all our greatest scientific men, that there is no substantial difference between the Ape and Man. One of the greatest has said that between himself and his poorer fellow citizens there was a wider difference than that which separated *them* from the Monkey. Hæckel has testified that while there is a *boundary*, there is no *gulf* between the corps of professors to which he belongs and the Chimpanzee. The Gorilla is universally accepted, and if we have won the battle for the Gorilla, the rest will follow.

Tolstoy is with us, Webb is with us, Gorky is with us, Zola and Ferrer were with us and fight for us from their graves. The whole current of modern thought is with us.  
WE CANNOT FAIL!

*Questions submitted at the last Election by the Simian League*

1. Are you in favour of removing the present disabilities of Monkeys?

2. Are you in favour of a short Statute which should put adult Monkeys upon the same footing as other subjects of His Majesty as from the 1st of January, 1912? And *would you, if necessary, vote against your party in favour of such a measure?*

3. Are you in favour of the inclusion of Monkeys under the Wild Birds Act?

(A plain reply 'Yes' or 'No' was to be written by the candidate under each of these questions and forwarded to the Secretary, Mr. Consul, 73 Purbeck Street, W., before the 14th January, 1910. No replies received after that date were admitted. The Simian League, which has agents in every constituency, acted according to the replies received, and treated the lack of reply as a negative. Of 1,375 circulars sent, 309 remained unanswered, 264 were answered in the negative, 201 gave a qualified affirmative, *all the rest (no less than 799) a clear and, in some cases, an enthusiastic adherence to our principles.* It is a sufficient proof of the power of the League and the growth of the cause of justice that in these 799 no less than 515 are members of the present House of Commons.)



## The Death of Wandering Peter



I WILL confess and I will not deny,' said Wandering Peter (of whom you have heard little but of whom in God's good time you shall hear more). 'I will confess and I will not deny that the chief pleasure I know is the contemplation of my fellow beings.'

He spoke thus in his bed in the inn of a village upon the River Yonne beyond Auxerre, in which bed he lay a-dying; but though he was dying he was full of words.

'What energy! What cunning! What desire! I have often been upon the edge of a steep place, such as a chalk pit or a cliff above a plain, and watched them down below, hurrying around, turning about, laying down, putting up, leading, making, organizing, driving, considering, directing, exceeding, and restraining; upon my soul I was proud to be one of them! I have said to myself,' said Wandering Peter, 'lift up your heart; you also are one of these! For though I am,' he continued, 'a wandering man and lonely, given to the hills and to empty places, yet I glory in the workers on the plain, as might a poor man in his noble lineage. From these I came; to these in my old age I would have returned.'

At these words the people about his bed fell to sobbing when they thought how he would never wander more, but Peter Wanderwide continued with a high heart:

'How pleasant it is to see them plough! First they cunningly contrive an arrangement that throws the earth aside and tosses it to the air, and then, since they are too weak to pull the same, they use great beasts, oxen or horses or even elephants, and impose them with their will, so that they patiently haul this contrivance through the thick clods; they tear up and they put into furrows, and they transform the earth. Nothing can withstand them. Birds you will think



could escape them by flying up into the air. It is an error. Upon birds also my people impose their view. They spread nets, food, bait, trap, and lime. They hail stones and shot and arrows at them. They cause some by a perpetual discipline to live near them, to lay eggs and to be killed at will; of this sort are hens, geese, turkeys, ducks, and guinea-fowls. Nothing eludes the careful planning of man.

‘Moreover, they can build. They do not build this way or that, as a dull necessity forces them, not they! They build as they feel inclined. They hew down, they saw through (and how marvellous is a saw!), they trim timber, they mix lime and sand, they excavate the recesses of the hills. Oh! the fine fellows! They can at whim make your chambers or the Tower prison, or my aunt’s new villa at Wimbledon (which is a joke of theirs), or St. Pancras Station, or the Crystal Palace, or Westminster Abbey, or St. Paul’s, or Bon Secours. They are agreeable to every change in the wind that blows about the world. It blows Gothic, and they say “By all means”—and there is your Gothic—a thing dreamt of and done! It suddenly veers south again and blows from the Mediterranean. The jolly little fellows are equal to the strain, and up goes Amboise, and Anet, and the Louvre, and all the Renaissance. It blows everyhow and at random as though in anger at seeing them so ready. They care not at all! They build the Eiffel Tower, the Queen Anne house, the Mary Jane house, the Modern-Style house, the Carlton, the Ritz, the Grand Palais, the Trocadero, Olympia, Euston, the Midhurst Sanatorium, and old Beit’s Palace in Park Lane. They are not to be defeated, they have immortal certitudes.

‘Have you considered their lines and their drawings and their cunning plans?’ said Wandering Peter. ‘They are astonishing there! Put a bit of charcoal into my dog’s mouth or my pet monkey’s paw—would he copy the world? Not he! But men—my brothers—*they* take it in hand and make war against the unspeaking forces; the trees and the hills are



of their own showing, and the places in which they dwell, by their own power, become full of their own spirit. Nature is made more by being their model, for in all they draw, paint, or chisel they are in touch with heaven and with hell. . . . They write (Lord! the intelligence of their men, and Lord! the beauty of their women). They write unimaginable things!

‘They write epics, they write lyrics, they write riddles and marching songs and drinking songs and rhetoric, and chronicles, and elegies, and pathetic memories; and in everything that they write they reveal things greater than they know. They are capable,’ said Peter Wanderwide, in his dying enthusiasm, ‘of so writing that the thought enlarges upon the writing and becomes far more than what they have written. They write that sort of verse called “Stop-Short”, which when it is written makes one think more violently than ever, as though it were an introduction to the realms of the soul. And then again they write things which gently mock themselves and are a consolation for themselves against the doom of death.’

But when Peter Wanderwide said that word ‘death’, the howling and the boo-hooing of the company assembled about his bed grew so loud that he could hardly hear himself think. For there was present the Mayor of the village, and the Priest of the village, and the Mayor’s wife, and the Adjutant Mayor or Deputy Mayor, and the village Councillor, and the Road-mender, and the Schoolmaster, and the Cobbler, and all the notabilities, as many as could crush into the room, and none but the Doctor was missing.

And outside the house was a great crowd of the village folk, weeping bitterly and begging for news of him, and mourning that so great and so good a man should find his death in so small a place.

Peter Wanderwide was sinking very fast, and his life was



going out with his breath, but his heart was still so high that he continued although his voice was failing:

‘Look you, good people all, in your little passage through the daylight, get to see as many hills and buildings and rivers, fields, books, men, horses, ships, and precious stones as you can possibly manage to do. Or else stay in one village and marry in it and die there. For one of these two fates is the best fate for every man. Either to be what I have been, a wanderer with all the bitterness of it, or to stay at home and hear in one’s garden the voice of God.

‘For my part I have followed out my fate. And I propose in spite of my numerous iniquities, by the recollection of my many joys in the glories of this earth, as by corks, to float myself in the sea of nothingness until I reach the regions of the Blessed and the pure in heart.

‘For I think when I am dead Almighty God will single me out on account of my accoutrement, my stirrup leathers, and the things that I shall be talking of concerning Ireland and the Perigord, and my boat upon the narrow seas; and I think He will ask St. Michael, who is the Clerk and Registrar of battling men, who it is that stands thus ready to speak (unless his eyes betray him) of so many things? Then St. Michael will forget my name although he will know my face; he will forget my name because I never stayed long enough in one place for him to remember it.

‘But St. Peter, because he is my Patron Saint and because I have always had a special devotion to him, will answer for me and will have no argument, for he holds the keys. And he will open the door and I will come in. And when I am inside the door of Heaven I shall freely grow those wings, the pushing and nascence of which have bothered my shoulder blades with birth pains all my life long, and more especially since my thirtieth year. I say, friends and companions all, that I shall grow a very satisfying and supporting pair of wings, and once I am so furnished I shall be received



among the Blessed, and I shall at once begin to tell them, as I told you on earth, all sorts of things, both false and true, with regard to the countries through which I carried forward my homeless feet, and in which I have been given such fulfilment for my eyes.'

When Peter Wanderwide had delivered himself of these remarks, which he did with great dignity and fire for one in such extremity, he gasped a little, coughed, and died.

I need not tell you what solemnities attended his burial, nor with what fervour the people flocked to pray at his tomb; but it is worth knowing that the poet of that place, who was rival to the chief poet in Auxerre itself, gathered up the story of his death into a rhyme, written in the dialect of that valley, of which rhyme this is an English translation:

When Peter Wanderwide was young  
He wandered everywhere he would;  
And all that he approved was sung,  
And most of what he saw was good.

When Peter Wanderwide was thrown  
By Death himself beyond Auxerre,  
He chanted in heroic tone  
To Priest and people gathered there:

'If all that I have loved and seen  
Be with me on the Judgement Day,  
I shall be saved the crowd between  
From Satan and his foul array.

'Almighty God will surely cry  
"St. Michael! Who is this that stands  
With Ireland in his dubious eye,  
And Perigord between his hands,

"And on his arm the stirrup thongs,  
And in his gait the narrow seas,  
And in his mouth Burgundian songs,  
But in his heart the Pyrenees?"

'St. Michael then will answer right  
(But not without angelic shame):  
"I seem to know his face by sight;  
I cannot recollect his name. . . ."

'St. Peter will befriend me then,  
Because my name is Peter too;  
"I know him for the best of men  
That ever wallopped barley brew.

"And though I did not know him well,  
And though his soul were clogged with sin,  
*I* hold the keys of Heaven and Hell.  
Be welcome, noble Peterkin."

'Then shall I spread my native wings  
And tread secure the heavenly floor,  
And tell the Blessed doubtful things  
Of Val d'Aran and Perigord.'

This was the last and solemn jest  
Of weary Peter Wanderwide,  
He spoke it with a failing zest,  
And having spoken it, he died.



## On Sailing the Seas



I NEVER sail the sea but I wonder what makes a people take to it and then leave it again. Nor have I ever seen an explanation of this; therefore it is that the speculation is of value, for it is one of those which go round and round upon themselves and never come to an end, and so give entertainment to the mind.

When you read in books that such-and-such a nation took to the sea you are usually given a very pretty little explanation of a material kind, as is the modern fashion. They took to the sea because they were situated at such-and-such a point, because the sea they lived on was sheltered, or because they had very good harbours.

It is all nonsense. Those who write like that cannot themselves have sailed the sea. To sail the sea is an occupation at once repulsive and attractive. It is repulsive because it is dangerous, horribly uncomfortable, cramped and unnatural: for man is a land animal. It is attractive because it brings adventure and novelty at every moment, and because, looking back upon it, a man feels a certain pride both in danger overcome and in experience. But it is also attractive in another and much more powerful fashion. It is attractive by a sort of appetite. A man having sailed the sea and the habit having bitten into him, he will always return to it: why, he cannot tell you. It is what modern people call a 'lure' or a 'call'. He has got it in him and it will not let him rest.

That, I think, is the best answer in the long run to the question I put myself whenever I come back from sailing the sea.

The question, why did such-and-such nations take to the sea and why for so long a time, and then again abandon it for so long a time, I can answer in no other way.



It is a beckoning from powers outside mankind.

It is not even the establishment of commerce by sea which takes a people to sea. Nothing more likely than for a nation to become a nation of transport and yet to see its crews gradually becoming foreign, as its own people grew to dislike the nasty but mysteriously summoning business of wet decks and thumping. It certainly is not proximity to the sea that does the trick. You have all over the world great lumps of population, millions and millions, right on to the sea, who never take to it, but leave a fringe of foreigners to do their sailing. Witness the Slavs. And though, of course, it is true that inland nations are not seafaring nations, the real reason is much more that they choose to be inland than that they happen to be inland.

I have asked myself often enough why the old Egyptians did not take to the sea. Perhaps they did very long ago, but at any rate the memory of it has died out. The other people who traded with them from the North have not even legends of Egyptians coming to them. We have no stories or inscriptions of Egyptians common in the harbours of the Mediterranean. And yet they had a great river going straight out to sea and a coast that for thousands of years, in the height of their power, invited them. They had ships, no doubt, which were sea-going. We know of fleets, but we are not always certain that they were Egyptian fleets, even when they were fleets under the command of the Egyptian king. What we have not got is an Egyptian maritime legend or tradition.

On the other hand, you find an enormous, volcanic, seafaring energy just where it should not be—on the harbourless coast of the Levant. And it seems certain, to me reading, that those seafarers who kept it up for centuries, the people of Tyre and Sidon, were driven by masterful instinct. It seems possible or even probable that they started from some little islands in the Persian Gulf, and that, for



some reason, they came all this way across desert land and began again from other little islands hundreds of miles away, upon another sea. Once they had started from the Levantine coast they did everything that the sea makes one do. They explored, and they named. They must have felt the fun of the thing. Commerce can only have been their second motive, though naturally it is the motive *we* put first to-day.

A learned member of the University of Paris has shown that most of the inexplicable Greek names of the Mediterranean were but Phoenician names transformed, and they even went out of the tideless sea into the huge unknown swell of the ocean. And they reached, according to one story, those tin-mines which were either off the Spanish coast or in some part of Britain—perhaps Cornwall.

But remark that these people had everything against them. It is silly to say that they were driven to commerce by their geographical position between East and West. It was just the other way. Their geographical position was the worst possible. The splendid harbours which lay some days' sail to the west of them they knew nothing of. They were on a coast less suited for the shelter of vessels than any in the whole Mediterranean, unless it be the eastern coast of Barbary. They went to sea because a passion seized them for it, because it was in their blood.

I notice again that this passion for the sea does not go, as one would think it ought to, with a particular physical type, nor even with a particular mental type. It certainly goes with a love of adventure, but not with mere vigour, nor even with mere imagination. And the same race will appear, for generations, inhabited by this haunting of the sea, and then will suddenly drop it again.

This island is an example. It was seafaring all during the Roman centuries. Then after the robber raids of the Saxons, Angles, Irish, Frisians, Franks, and the rest, it lost all idea of the sea. When England had become a welter of little



districts Pagan and Christian all fighting each other in the sixth and seventh centuries, England no longer went to sea. It got cut off; and when, a little later, seafaring men from Scandinavia attacked it, it could not defend itself. It lay passive. It was not till Alfred's time, more than 400 years after the catastrophe of the first pirate raids in Britain, that there was something of a reluctant seafaring again; and even then it was for more than a hundred years easier to hire Scandinavian crews than to get Englishmen aboard.

But all this while the Irish and the people of the Far West, the Welsh, Southern and Northern, and the Cornish, were filling their legends with the sea.

Then, after a few centuries, the English woke up again to the sea most furiously, in the turn of the Middle Ages. The sea moves them less and less later on. They half forget it. And again, 350 years ago, it catches them again, and they become great captains and have so remained, the English.

This makes me think of another thing, which is the difference in the way the sea has affected the literature of one seafaring nation and another. And there again I can find no explanation. The poems of Homer (which were not, if I may humbly suggest it, written by a committee, but by one man, for it is a rare and individual thing to write a good poem, and these poems are good) are not so much influenced by the sea as are themselves the sea. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are epics of the sea—yes, not only the *Odyssey*, but the *Iliad* too. The sea comes in all the time and mixes up with the story in a way it does with no other story, not even with the story of Tristan. The moment a word or two on the sea comes into the *Iliad* the phrase wakes up and moves, and, what is more, *there* you get exact physical description, physical description by a man who has sailed. In most of Homer what is vivid is either a knowledge of what was in men's minds, or a thing told to the writer by others, or the gentle contemplation of some art of which he was himself



ignorant and which seemed to him marvellous. But in the matter of the sea it is quite another thing. The names of the Nereids, of the 'Nereids as many as there are in the depths of the salt', from the thirty-eighth to the forty-eighth line, those ten lines of marvel, are the names of waves, and of waves seen by the eye of a man. They are not at second hand. They are all the aspects and all the revelations of the wave.

I am told also that the poet Hesiod gave a complete catalogue of these same ladies, but did it rather less well. Homer has a heavenly roll-call of them, and the best of their names, in my unfortunate judgement, is 'Limnoreia', 'the wave that runs along the shore'. For I also have seen Her, gently running in easy weather along the half-ebb glistening sand, a distant shore. But all their names are at once beautiful and true.

Then also, how exact are his words for the noise of a boat speaking through the depths of the water! And what an epithet for the sea is 'cloud-shadowed', or, for the matter of that, 'wine dark', though it is true the same word is granted to oxen.

But the thing is not to be argued. You feel it or you do not. I think that conception of horses running on wave-tops was written by a man who had often sailed the sea.

I am tempted to go on with the theme. But if I went further I should be tedious, and perhaps I am so already, for all I know.

To continue, therefore (for if you are being tedious you cannot let go, any more than a tired horse can stop running lest it fall): There are cities made for the sea, and yet they allow themselves to be visited, and do not themselves attempt the sea at all. While there are other cities which you would think long fate and suffering would cure of desperate attempts to use the sea, and yet they use it in the teeth of fate; among which last I count—though they are



not cities at all, but only little towns—my own small harbours of the Channel.

These holes in the land are for the most part quite unsuited to the business of navigation. But how gallantly they keep it up! I know one of them where there forms with regularity every few weeks an enormous island of shingle right in the fairway. It is a harbour out of which no man can come (without a tug) except once in twelve hours on the top of the tide. And even so that huge mass of shingle is piled up plumb in the mouth of it by the south-west wind after every gale, and the gales come every week in winter. Yet do these hearty people dredge that shingle away year after year, and they have done so, I suppose, for 2,000 years, rather than forgo their occupation of the sea.

What sort of people do you suppose were those fellows of the Morbihan who produced vast ships rigged with iron chains, and boasting leathern sails, yet having nowhere, you would say, whither they could trade? The indomitable Romans defeated them at last in their own waters a little north of St. Nazaire, under Quiberon; but what a fight they put up! I think they must have gone to sea for the mere love of it, these men of the Morbihan, as do their descendants to this day. For they are all poor men and get little from their occupation beyond dreams and death.

I know a town also with which the name of Columbus is associated, and some even say (falsely) that his family came from there. It is a town about a day's march north of Vigo, on the Galician coast, and is called 'The Green Port', lying at the head of a land-locked bay. One would have thought that Vigo close by, with its incomparable harbour, would have killed it. But, on the contrary, it flourishes because it is in love with the sea. It is the neatest, whitest little town in the world.

But when it comes to daring, there is nothing we can show, with our modern ease of appliance, like the things



that those men did, and not only they, but all the early unrecorded heroes of our race. When the Roman poet wondered at the courage of those who first set out to sea at all, he was right. But what must have been the courage of those who went out until they had long lost sight of land in an adventure as enormous as that of death and who chanced a landfall after a day or twenty days? If you go across the Atlantic now, for instance, in any one of our ships that are like towns, and look at the size of the seas in a storm, you may ask yourself how men must have felt in that same water upon a craft of, say, three hundred tons, and with no knowledge at all of what lay beyond or whether they should ever see land again.

It is curious that those same historians who belittle the past (and most modern historians do that) will not admit at least that our fathers could build good ships. I have said 'three hundred tons' modestly, but your modern historian will, as a rule, reduce the tonnage of the past to the most ridiculous cockle-shells. He wants to believe that nothing big in the way of a ship was made until the time of people who thought like himself—that is, who had his own religion. Yet in spreading this falsehood our modern historians do but increase our admiration of our fathers' courage. They do not diminish the great past by this particular lie. It is clear that both antiquity and the Middle Ages had large ships: not large compared with the monsters of to-day, but much larger than modern history allows. I have had arguments on this both in print and by word of mouth. For by some fatality the modern historian, who is ignorant of most things (such as ploughing or riding on horses or the length of a day's march), is particularly ignorant of the sea.

When such people tell you, for instance, that the fleet of William the Conqueror was made up of ships like fishing-smacks, ask him how that invader carried his horses; and



carry horses they certainly did, because within a day or two of landing they were there armed and mounted in great numbers. Or ask him, also, for that matter, how they carried their provisions and all the accompaniment of an army.

I seem to remember making a note somewhere of a ship that was built in Bayonne in the Middle Ages, the keel of which, apart from the overhang, was well over 100 ft. long. I was going to say 190, but as it is only a memory and I have not the notes by me, I may be wrong if I say that. It was certainly well over 100, and the record was exact. After all, there is no reason why men who could build a wooden ship at all—I mean a ship to hold the sea—could not build one up to a thousand tons or more. The limit is rather a limit of handling sails than of building. For what made our sudden modern increase in the size of ships was the use of a new motive power.

But one thing was certainly true of all those old ships, and remained true until quite modern times, and that was their light draught. They were all flat; and this is the more remarkable when one considers their high free-board. I have no doubt that those who study these things, which I do not, and who are experts in them, can explain the affair: it has always puzzled me badly. In very old pictures, miniatures, sculptures, or later engravings and drawings and paintings, the first thing that strikes me is this excess of free-board. I think it must strike the most casual observer who goes down to Portsmouth and looks at the modern low lines of the great men-of-war and contrasts them with the huge wall of the *Victory* size for size. One would think that so much free-board would have made the old craft top-heavy.

In the earlier ships we note regularly great structures forward and astern, poops and forecastles, which look as though they would give a most dangerous purchase to a



beam wind, let alone lifting the centre of gravity of the boat too high. Yet they carried these easily, for all their light draught. How very light that draught was until quite modern times, we know by the nature of the harbours they entered, and we also know it from their habit of beaching boats. You read often enough of shipwreck, but very rarely indeed of shipwreck through capsizing. That may be because in earlier times they did not take the wind abeam. But I doubt it.

I imagine the common judgement that sailing into the wind is a recent art to be false. The old ships may not have sailed close to the wind; they certainly did not sail as close to the wind as we do; but that they could sail with the wind a little forward of the beam seems to me common sense. No one can sail a boat of the simplest rig—a boat with a mere balance sail or catrig—without finding that she can go into the wind. And a boat that could not go into the wind at all could never be certain of harbour. It is true they waited for a fair wind, as for that matter would most sailing-boats to-day if they had the time, and as do all sailing-boats when the wind is too much against them. No man, for instance, could beat out of Rye. There is no room. And in any modern week you may see sailing craft anchored in the Downs, or west of Dungeness, or in any one of the Roads of the Channel, waiting for a favourable wind to take them up or down. But that the ships our forefathers used could not sail into the wind at all seems to me nonsense. Being flat, however, they must have made a lot of leeway, and that is perhaps why it was not worth their while to try and beat for any distance against a strong breeze.

‘Leeway!’ Why did the devices for overcoming that drawback arrive so late in history? They are deep keels—which is a waste of space and a forbidding of harbours, so that antiquity apparently never adopted them—lee boards and centre boards.



Now lee boards I take to be an invention of the Dutch, who also gave us, if I am not mistaken, the origin of that admirable rig, perfected in the Thames, the London barge. But why did people take such a very long time to think of lee boards? I cannot pretend to the required scholarship and I may be wrong, but surely there is no example of a lee board in antiquity, nor even in any picture remaining to us of the Middle Ages? I take it that the lee board was one of those thousand things quietly invented, unspoken of, between the Dark Ages and the Renaissance, and that the people of the Low Countries were its authors.

As for the centre board, we know that it is a thing of yesterday. If I am not mistaken, the Americans first sailed on it. I can understand why the centre board should have come so late. It wants great skill in fitting. It seems to invite a leak. It cannot be fitted upon any very large craft easily—and so on. But why did it take humanity such a very long time to think of lee boards, and why, when they came, did they come in this particular corner of Europe?

There is nothing more fascinating than this guess-work upon the origin of little human tricks and the observation of the long and great effect of routine.

To this day the Mediterranean shortens sail along the yard of a lateen—why, I have never got anyone to explain to me. It would seem the obvious thing to take in a reef from the deck, to put your craft up into the wind, lower your sail somewhat, and then take your reef along the foot of it. Indeed, it would be much easier to take in a reef in this fashion on a lateen sail than it is to take one along the boom in an ordinary fore-and-aft rig. You need no ear-ring, and the thing could be done in a moment. Instead of which the swarthy men prefer to lower away the whole contraption. I do not understand the reason at all. Perhaps there is no reason—or, again, perhaps I am wrong and therefore there is no problem at all.



These are the two delightful ways of meeting all the problems which upset mankind, from that of free will to fascinating discussions on the currency, now so much in vogue.

And a blessing I wish you all.

## The Servants of the Rich



**D**O you mark there, down in the lowest point and innermost funnel of Hell Fire Pit, souls writhing in smoke, themselves like glowing smoke and tortured in the flame? You ask me what they are. These are the Servants of the Rich: the men who in their mortal life opened the doors of the Great Houses and drove the carriages and sneered at the unhappy guests.

Those larger souls that bear the greatest doom and manifest the more dreadful suffering, they are the Butlers boiling in molten gold.

‘What!’ you cry, ‘is there then, indeed, as I once heard in childhood, justice for men and an equal balance, and a final doom for evil deeds?’ There is! Look down into the murky hollow and revere the awful accomplishment of human things.

These are the men who would stand with powder on their heads like clowns, dressed in fantastic suits of gold and plush, with an ugly scorn upon their faces, and whose pleasure it was (while yet their time of probation lasted) to forget every human bond and to cast down the nobler things in man: treating the artist as dirt and the poet as a clown; and beautiful women, if they were governesses or poor relations or in any way dependents, as a meet object for silent mockery. But now their time is over and they have reaped the harvest which they sowed. Look and take comfort, all you who may have suffered at their hands.

Come closer. See how each separate sort suffers its peculiar penalty. There go a hopeless shoal through the reek: their doom is an eternal sleeplessness and a nakedness in the gloom. There is nothing to comfort them, not even memory: and they know that for ever and for ever they



must plunge and swirl, driven before the blasts, now hot, now icy, of their everlasting pain. These are those men who were wont to come into the room of the Poor Guest at early morning with a steadfast and assured step and a look of insult. These are those who would take the tattered garments and hold them at arm's length as much as to say: 'What rags these scribblers wear!' and then, casting them over the arm with a gesture that meant: 'Well, they must be brushed, but Heaven knows if they will stand it without coming to pieces!', would next discover in the pockets a great quantity of middle-class things, and notably loose tobacco.

These are they that would then take out with the utmost patience, private letters, money, pocket-books, knives, dirty crumpled stamps, scraps of newspapers, broken cigarettes, pawn tickets, keys, and much else, muttering within themselves so that one could almost hear it with their lips: 'What a jumble these paupers stuff their shoddy with! They do not even know that in the Houses of the Great it is not customary to fill the pockets! They do not know that the Great remove at night from their pockets such few trinkets of diamonded gold as they may contain. Where were they born or bred? To think that *I* should have to serve such cattle! No matter! He has brought money with him I am glad to see—borrowed, no doubt—and I will bleed him well.'

Such thoughts one almost heard as one lay in the Beds of the Great despairing. Then one would see him turn one's socks inside out, which is a ritual with the horrid tribe. Then a great bath would be trundled in and he would set beside it a great can and silently pronounce the judgement that whatever else was forgiven the middle-class one thing would not be forgiven them—the neglect of the bath, of the splashing about of the water and of the adequate wetting of the towel.



All these things we have suffered, you and I, at their hands. But be comforted. They writhe in Hell with their fellows.

That man who looked us up and down so insolently when the great doors were opened in St. James's Square and who thought one's boots so comic. He too, and all his like, burn separately. So does that fellow with the wine that poured it out ungenerously, and clearly thought that we were in luck's way to get the bubbly stuff at all in any measure. He that conveyed his master's messages with a pomp that was instinct with scorn, and he that drove you to the station, hardly deigning to reply to your timid sentences and knowing well your tremors and your abject ill-ease. Be comforted. He too burns.

It is the custom in Hell when this last batch of scoundrels, the horsey ones, come up in batches to be dealt with by the authorities thereof, for them first to be asked in awful tones how many pieces of silver they have taken from men below the rank of a squire, or whose income was less than a thousand pounds a year, and the truth on this they are compelled by Fate to declare, whereupon, before their tortures begin, they receive as many stripes as they took florins: nor is there any defect in the arrangement of divine justice in their regard, save that the money is not refunded to us.

Cooks, housemaids, poor little scullery-maids, under-gardeners, estate carpenters of all kinds, small stable-lads, and in general all those humble Servants of the Rich who are debarred by their insolent superiors from approaching the guests and neither wound them with contemptuous looks, nor follow these up by brigandish demands for money, *these* you will not see in this Pit of Fire. For them is reserved a high place in Paradise, only a little lower than that supreme and cloudy height of bliss wherein repose the happy souls of all who on this earth have been Journalists.

But Game-Keepers, more particularly those who make a



distinction and will take nothing less than gold (nay *Paper!*), and Grooms of the Chamber, and all such, these suffer torments for ever and for ever. So has Immutable Justice decreed and thus is the offended majesty of man avenged.

And what, you will ask me perhaps at last, what of the dear old family servants, who are *so* good, *so* kind, *so* attached to Master Arthur and to Lady Jane?

Ah! . . . Of these the infernal plight is such that I dare not set it down!

There is a special secret room in Hell where their villainous hypocrisy and that accursed mixture of yielding and of false independence wherewith they flattered and befooled their masters; their thefts, their bullying of beggarmen, have at last a full reward. Their eyes are no longer sly and cautious, lit with the pretence of affection, nor are they here rewarded with good fires and an excess of food, and perquisites and pensions. But they sit hearthless, jibbering with cold, and they stare broken at the prospect of a dark Eternity. And now and then one or another, an aged serving-man or a white-haired housekeeper, will wring their hands and say: 'Oh, that I had once, only once, shown in my mortal life some momentary gleam of honour, independence or dignity! Oh, that I had but once stood up in my freedom and spoken to the Rich as I should! Then it would have been remembered for me and I should now have been spared this place—but it is too late!'

For there is no repentance known among the Servants of the Rich, nor any exception to their vileness; they are hated by men when they live, and when they die they must for all eternity consort with demons.

## The Regret

EVERYBODY knows, I suppose, that kind of landscape in which hills seem to lie in a regular manner, fold on fold, one range behind the other, until, at last, behind them all some higher and grander range dominates and frames the whole.

The infinite variety of light and air and accident of soil provide all men save those who live in the great plains with examples of this sort. The traveller in the dry air of California or of Spain, watching great distances from the heights, will recollect such landscapes all his life. They were the reward of his long ascents and the visions which attended his effort as he climbed up to the ridge of his horizon. Such a landscape does a man see from the Western edges of the Guadarrama, looking eastward and south toward the very distant hills that guard Toledo and the Gulf of the Tagus. Such a landscape does a man see at sunrise from the highest of the Cevennes looking right eastward to the dawn as it comes up in the pure and cold air beyond the Alps, and shows you the falling of the foot-hills to the Rhone. And by such a landscape is a man gladdened when upon the escarpments of the Tuolumne he turns back and looks westward over the plain towards the vast range.

The experience of such a sight is one peculiar in travel, or, for that matter, if a man is lucky enough to enjoy it at home, insistent and reiterated upon the mind of the home-dwelling man. Such a landscape, for instance, makes a man praise God if his house is upon the height of Mendip, and he can look over falling hills right over the Vale of Severn towards the ridge above ridge of the Welsh solemnities beyond, until the straight line and high of the Black Mountains ends his view.



It is the character of these landscapes to suggest at once a vastness, diversity, and seclusion. When a man comes upon them unexpectedly he can forget the perpetual toil of men and imagine that those who dwell below in the near side before him are exempt from the necessities of this world. When such a landscape is part of a man's dwelling-place, though he well knows that the painful life of men within those hills is the same hard business that it is throughout the world, yet his knowledge is modified and comforted by the permanent glory of the thing he sees.

The distant and high range that pounds his view makes a sort of veiling, cutting it off and guarding it from whatever may be beyond. The succession of lower ranges suggests secluded valleys, and the reiterated woods, distant and more distant, convey an impression of fertility more powerful than that of corn in harvest upon the lowlands.

Sometimes it is a whole province that is thus grasped by the eye, sometimes in the summer haze but a few miles; always this scenery inspires the onlooker with a sense of completion and of repose, and at the same time, I think, with worship and with awe.

Now one such group of valleys there was, hill above hill, forest above forest, and beyond it a great noble range unwooded and high against heaven, guarding it, which I for my part knew when first I knew anything of this world. There is a high place under fir trees, a place of sand and bracken, in South England whence such a view was always present to eye in childhood and 'There,' said I to myself (even in childhood) 'a man should make his habitation.' In those valleys is the proper off-set for man.

And so there was.

It was a little place which had grown up as my county grows. The house throwing out arms and layers. One room was panelled in the oak of the seventeenth century—but that had been a novelty in its time, for the walls upon which the



panels stood were of the late fifteenth, oak and brick intermingled. Another room was large and light, built in the manner of one hundred and fifty years ago, which people call Georgian. It had been thrown out south (which is quite against our older custom, for our older houses looked east and west to take all the sun and to present a corner to the south-west and the storms. So they stand still). It had round it a solid cornice which the modern men of the towns would have called ugly, but there was ancestry in it. Then, farther on, this house had modern roominess stretching in one new wing after another; and it had a great steading and there was a copse and some six acres of land. Over a deep ravine looked the little town that was the mother of the place, and altogether it was enclosed, silent, and secure.

'The fish that misses the hook regrets the worm.' If this is not a Chinese proverb it ought to be. That little farm and steading and those six acres, that ravine, those trees, that aspect of the little mothering town; the wooded hills fold above fold, the noble range beyond, will not be mine.

For all I know, some man quite unacquainted with that land took them grumbling for a debt; or again, for all I know, they may have been bought by a blind man who could not see the hills, or by some man who, seeing them, perpetually regretted the flat marshes of the fens. One day, up high on Egdean Side, not thinking of such things, through a gap in the trees I saw again after so many years, set one behind the other, the forests wave upon wave, the summer heat, the high, bare range guarding all, and in the midst of that landscape, set like a toy, the little Sabine Farm.

Then I said to it, 'Continue. Go and serve whom you will, my little Sabine Farm. You were not mine because you would not be, and you are not mine at all to-day. You will regret it perhaps, and perhaps you will not. There was verse in you, perhaps, or prose, or—infinately more!—contentment for a man (for all I know). But you refused. You lost



your chance. Good-bye.' And with that I went on into the wood and beyond the gap, and saw the sight no more.

It was ten years since I had seen it last. It may be ten years before I see it again, or it may be for ever. But as I went through the woods saying to myself:

'You lost your chance, my little Sabine Farm, you lost your chance!' another part of me at once replied:

'Ah! And so did *you*!'

Then, by way of riposte, I answered in my mind:

'Not at all, for the chance I never had, but what I lost was my desire.'

'No, not your desire,' said the voice to me within, 'but the fulfilment of it, in which you would have lost your desire.' And when that reply came I naturally turned as all men do on hearing such interior replies, to a general consideration of regret, and was prepared, if any honest publisher should have come whistling through that wood, with an offer proper to the occasion, namely, to produce no less than five volumes on the Nature of Regret, its mortal sting, its bitter-sweetness, its power to keep alive in man the pure passions of the soul, its hints at immortality, its memory of Heaven. But the wood was empty of publishers. The offer did not come. The moment was lost. The five volumes will hardly now be written. In place of them I offer poor this, which you may take or leave. But I beg leave before I end to cite certain words very nobly attached to that great inn 'The Griffin', which has its foundation set far off in another place, in the town of March, in the Fen Land:

'England my desire, what have you not refused?'

## On Mumbo-Jumbo ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞

MUMBO-JUMBO is that department in the ruling of men which is made of dead, false apparatus; unreasonable; contemptible to the free; unworthy of authority—and Mumbo-Jumbo is the most necessary ingredient in all government.

All government is by persuasion. Odd it is that so many do not yet see this! Perhaps not so odd after all; for words trick the mind, and the words of government are not the words of persuasion.

But think of the matter for a moment, and you will see that government is of necessity by persuasion. Here I catch the voices of two men, an ass and his uterine brother—that sort of braying centaur, half a rational being and half an ass. The ass tells me that government is merely the use of force; the centaur, half man, half donkey, tells me that it lives by the threat of force.

Well, take an example. I come to a properly governed State: a State, that is, where government is taken for granted and obeyed; why is it so? Because that government works for the good of the Governed. But an individual desiring to break a commandment even in such a state refrains only from fear of force? True; but who executes that force? Not the person who gave the command; not one man—for one is not strong. No, what executes the force is many; and how are many got to obey the will of one? It is by a process of suggestion, dope; that is, persuasion. While men were persuaded of the rights of private property, private property stood secure. Now that they are in transition it is insecure. If ever they are persuaded that private property is an injury, the institution will no longer be merely insecure; it will perish; and no amount of force will save it. It will perish



as a general institution and only millionaires and the mass of their servile dependents will remain.

Now, in this function of persuasion (which is the life of government) mark the imperative power of Mumbo-Jumbo! And mark it not only in political government, but in all those subsidiary forms of government (or persuasion) by which one mind influences another and directs it towards an end not originally its own. When the Police were on their last strike (I forget when it was—they succeed each other and will probably continue), an aged woman of means said in my hearing—seeing a batch go by in civilian clothes—‘Surely those can’t be policemen!’ By these words did the Crone prove how powerfully Mumbo-Jumbo had worked upon her mind. For her the Policeman was the helmet, the coat, the belt.

With soldiers it is even more so (I am prepared to defend the use of this elliptic idiom in private when next I have the leisure). Men used to wearing some particular accoutrement cannot regard another accoutrement as military; what is more, it is with difficulty—unless their profession is to judge armies—that they can see any military qualities in human beings clothed too much out of their fashion. When I was in garrison in the town of Toul in the year 1891, there came an English circus, with the men of which I made friends at once, for I had not heard English for a weary while. One of them said to me sadly: ‘They seem to have a lot of military about here, but they are not real soldiers.’ I have no doubt that if you got a man out of the fourteenth century and showed him suddenly a modern regiment in peace (without tin hats), he would think they were lackeys or pages; certainly not soldiers.

Once and again in the history of mankind has there arisen *Iconoclasm*, which is but a fury against Mumbo-Jumbo. There was a great outburst of it throughout the West at the end of the eighteenth century. Men were too classic then to



break statues with hammers, but they were all for tearing the wigs off Judges and the crowns off Kings and patchwork off Lords and Clowns, and for getting rid of titles, and the rest of it. They argued thus—'Such things are unworthy of Authority and even of men. They are lies: they therefore degrade us.' And they foamed at the mouth.

Ah, witless! All these things had a strict, even a logical connexion with public function. You may put it easily in two syllogisms: (1) Without Mumbo-Jumbo there is no permanent subconscious impression upon the mind, but without some permanent subconscious impression upon the mind there is no permanent persuasion; therefore, without Mumbo-Jumbo there is no persuasion. Now (2) without persuasion there is no government. Therefore (to take a short cut) there is no government without Mumbo-Jumbo. And those excellent men, of whom my own ancestry, French, English, Irish, and American, were composed ('And what,' you will say, 'has that to do with the matter?' Nothing), having got rid of Mumbo-Jumbo in a greater or less degree—less in England, more in France, most in America—immediately proceeded to set it up again.

Carefully did they scoop out the turnip, carefully did they light the candle within, carefully did they dress it up in rags and tinsel, and set it on its pole: there it stands to-day.

Flags in particular got a spurt through the slump in Kings. Formal play-acting in public assemblies got a vast accession through the contempt of Lords; and now, after a hundred years, we have so much fiddle-faddle of ceremonious 'rules' and 'Honourable gentlemen' and 'law of libel' and uniform here and uniform there that the State is now omnipotent, thanks to Mumbo-Jumbo, god and master of the broken Human Heart.

Of the Mumbo-Jumbo of the learned in footnotes I shall later write. And (as you will discover) I shall write also of



the Mumbo-Jumbo of technical words—a most fascinating department of my subject.

The Mumbo-Jumbo of the learned is indeed the very life of all teaching, of all academic authority. A man never teaches so well as when he is dressed up in a teaching fashion, and even those who still foolishly refuse so to dress him up (I quote with sorrow the Sorbonne) none the less put him on a raised platform; and he is better with a desk, and I think he is the better also with a certain artificial voice. The really great teachers also invent a certain artificial expression of face and affected unnatural accent, which they adopt at the beginning of a lecture and try to drop at the end of it; but in the process of years these get fixed and may be recognized at a hundred yards. For Mumbo-Jumbo holds his servants tight.

So also the authority of religion is badly wounded unless you have an archaic language; and every religion whatsoever adopts one as soon as it can. Some say that the most powerful of these instruments is a dead language; others say old, odd, mouldy forms of a living language, but at any rate Mumbo-Jumbo is of the essence of the contract.

Then there is the Mumbo-Jumbo of command: Thackeray used to ridicule it with the phrase 'Shaloo-Hump!' or some such sounds, and there is, as we all know, 'Shun' rapidly shouted, and many another. But anyone who has had to drill recruits will admit that he would never have got them drilled at all if instead of using these interesting idols of language he had given his commands in a rational and conversational tone with hesitation and urbanity.

Note you the Mumbo-Jumbo which may everywhere be classed under the term 'Official'. A common lie has no such effect as a lie with 'Official' at the top in brackets. Yet no one could tell you exactly what 'Official' meant. It suggests only this: that the news has been given by the Officer of some organization. Thus, if you say that a man has been



declared mad, and put 'Official', you mean that two members of the Doctors' Guild have been at work; or, if you are told that a funeral will not take place ('Official') you mean that a member of the Undertakers' Union has given you the information, or perhaps even a member of the family of the dead man. In this class we must also put the two phrases 'By Order' (used in this country) and 'Tremble and Obey', which, till recently stood (I understand) at the foot of Chinese documents.

'By Order' is a Mumbo-Jumbo pearl! How often in lonely walks through the London streets have I mused within my own dear mind and marvelled at 'By Order'. When I read for instance 'No Whistling Allowed (By Order)' I wonder who gave the order and how he climbed to such a novel power. How came he so strong that he could prevent my whistling or in any other way enlivening London? And why did he hide his magic name? I take it that he had no vulgar legal power, but something more compelling and more mysterious, a priestly thing. And there are others. People who own more than 2,000 acres of land love to paint 'By Order' in black letters on little white boards. With these they ornament the boundaries of their possessions.

Mumbo-Jumbo has this defect, that if the spell fails through unfamiliarity it looks grotesque; therefore it is essential for all governments to shoe-horn any new Mumbo-Jumbo very carefully into its place.

It must begin with some little habit, hardly acknowledged, hardly noticeable, and it must only gradually grow into admitted authority. Turn Mumbo-Jumbo on too suddenly and people would only laugh. And while I think of it let me say that *paint* is a main incarnation of Mumbo-Jumbo; paint with varnish—the complete form of paint. People who sail boats know this very well. I will buy you for a few pounds a very rotten old hulk, abandoned in Hamble River, I will stop up the leaks with cement, paint her sides a bright



colour, varnish the paint and then varnish her decks, and sell her at an enormous profit. It is done continually; lives are lost through it, of course; the boat bursts asunder in the midst of the sea; but the cheat never fails. Those who understand the art of horse dealing (which I do not) assure me that much the same thing attaches to that also. It seems there are poisons which you can give a horse whereby it acquires a glossy coat, and that even the eyes of the stupid beast can be made vivacious after long dullness. It may be so.

But of all the Mumbo-Jumbos, that which I admire most, because of its excess and potency combined, is the Mumbo-Jumbo of wine. One would think that in such a matter, where the senses are directly concerned, and where every man can and should act for himself, there was no room for this element in persuasion. It would be an error so to think. There is not one man in a hundred who is not almost entirely guided in a matter of wine by Mumbo-Jumbo. There is here the Mumbo-Jumbo of particular terms, very well-chosen metaphors, and a man is told that a Wine is 'full', or 'curious', or 'dry', or 'pretty', or 'sound', or something of that kind, and even as he tastes the ink he does not doubt, but believes.

And there is the Mumbo-Jumbo of the years ('This is a '75 Brandy!'—What a lie!), and there is the Mumbo-Jumbo of labels. And there is the arch-Mumbo-Jumbo of little wicker baskets and dust. And the whole of that vast trade, the source of so much pleasure and profit to mankind, floats upon an ocean of Mumbo-Jumbo. Most of the claret you drink is either a rough Algerian wine filled out with dirty water of great Garonne, or wine from the Hérault, or the two mixed. But Lord! what names and titles the concoction bears, including the Mumbo-Jumbo of 'Bottled at the Château'.

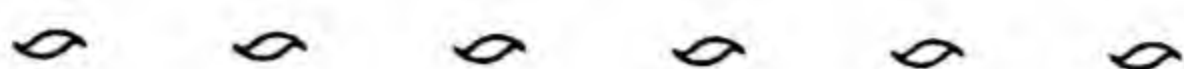
And do you think that men would be happier in the drinking of wine if they dropped all this? They would not; and that for two reasons. First, that this would be making

them work. They would have to judge for themselves. It would be calling upon them for Effort, and that is hateful to all mankind. Secondly, without the Mumbo-Jumbo, most men would not know whether they were enjoying the wine or not. Therefore I say let Mumbo-Jumbo flourish—and even increase—if that be possible.

Let Mumbo-Jumbo flourish, not only in the matter of wine, and not only in the matter of learning, and not only in the matter of positive government (where it is absolutely *essential*), and not only in the falsehoods of the daily Press, and not only in the Ecclesiastical affair, nor only in that still more Mumbo-Jumbo world of sceptical philosophy, but also in all the most intimate personal relations of men. I am for it! I am for it! I am for it! Born a Mumbo-Jumboite, I propose to die in the happy air which surrounds my nourishing Divinity.



## On Footnotes



IT is pleasant to consider the various forms of lying, because that study manifests the creative ingenuity of man and at the same time affords the diverting spectacle of the dupe. That kind of lying which, of the lesser sorts, has amused me most is the use of the footnote in modern history.

It began with no intention of lying at all. The first modest footnote was an occasional reinforcement of argument in the text. The writer could not break his narrative; he had said something unusual; he wanted his reader to accept it; and so he said, in little, 'If you doubt this, look up my authority so and so.' That was the age of innocence. Then came the serpent, or rather a whole brood of them.

The first big man I can find introducing the first considerable serpent is Gibbon. He still uses the footnote legitimately as the occasional reinforcement of a highly challengeable statement, but he also brings in new features.

I do not know if he is original in this. I should doubt it, for he had not an original mind, but was essentially a copier of the contemporary French writers and a pupil of Voltaire's. But, anyhow, Gibbon's is the first considerable work in which I find the beginnings of the earliest vices or corruptions of the footnote. The first of these is much the gravest, and I must confess no one has used it so well as Gibbon; he had genius here as in much else. It is the use of the footnote to take in the plain man, the ordinary reader. Gibbon abounds in this use.

His favourite way of doing this is to make a false statement in the text and then to qualify it in the footnote in such words that the learned cannot quarrel with him, while the unlearned are thoroughly deceived. He tells you in the text that the thing was so certainly, when he very well knows



that it was not, and that if there is a scrap of evidence for it, that evidence is bad. Then he puts in a footnote, a qualification of what he has just said in the text, so that the critic who really knows the subject has to admit that Gibbon knew it too. As though I should write 'The Russians marched through England in 1914', and then put a footnote, 'But see the later criticisms of this story in the accurate and fanatical Jones.' At other times Gibbon bamboozles the ordinary reader by a reference which *looks* learned and *is* inane; so that your plain man says, 'Well, I cannot look up all these old books, but this great man has evidently done so.'

A first-rate example of both these tricks combined in Gibbon is the famous falsehood he propagated about poor St. George, of whom, Heaven be witness, little enough<sup>1</sup> is known without having false stories foisted upon him. You will find it in his twenty-third chapter, where he puts forward the absurd statement that St. George was identical with George of Cappadocia, the corrupt and disgraceful bacon-contractor and the opponent of St. Athanasius.

This particular, classical example of the Evil Footnote is worth quoting. Here are the words:<sup>2</sup> 'The infamous George of Cappadocia has been transformed into the renowned St. George of England.'

And here is the footnote:

This transformation is not given as absolutely certain but as extremely probable. See *Longueruana*, Tom. I, p. 194.

That footnote at once 'hedges'—modifies the falsehood in the text *and* assumes peculiar and recondite learning. That long title '*Longueruana*' sounds like the devil and all! You will be surprised to hear that the reference is to a rubbishy book of guess-work, with no pretence to historical value,

<sup>1</sup> I should have said, *nothing*.

<sup>2</sup> This is a good opportunity, observe:—Gibbon, *Dec. and Fall of Rom. Emp.* Ed. 1831 (Cassell), Cap. XXIII, Par. 27, n. 125. Does it not look impressive?



run together by a Frenchman of the eighteenth century; from this Frenchman did Gibbon take the absurdity of St. George originating with George of Cappadocia. I was at the pains of looking this up—perhaps the first, and certainly the last, of my generation to do so.

Another vice of the footnote (equally illustrated in that lie of Gibbon's about St. George) is what I may call its use as the 'footnote of exception'. It is universal to-day. You say something which is false and then you quote in a footnote one or more authorities supporting it. Anyone can do it: and if the reader is reasonably ignorant of the subject the trick always succeeds. Thus, one might say that the earth was flat and put in a footnote two or three references to the flat-earth pamphlets of which I have a little collection at home. I am told that a wealthy lady, the widow of a brewer, supported the Flat-Earth Society which published these tracts and that upon her death it collapsed. It may be so.

The next step of the footnote in iniquity was when it became a mask. Who started this I know not, but I should imagine that the great German school which remodelled history in the nineteenth century was to blame. At any rate their successors the French are now infinitely worse. I have seen a book purporting to be a history in which of every page not more than a quarter was text, and the rest a dreary regiment of references. There is no doubt at all about the motives, mixed though they are. There is the desire of the fool to say, 'Though I can't digest the evidence, yet I *know* it. Here it is.' There is the desire of the timid man to throw up fortification. There is the desire of the pedant to show other pedants as well as the general reader (who, by the way, has almost given up reading such things, they have become so dull) that he also has been in Arcadia.

I notice that when anything is published without such footnotes, the professional critic—himself a footnoter of the deepest dye—accuses the author of romancing. If you



put in details of the weather, of dress and all the rest of it, minutely gathered from any amount of reading, but refuse to spoil a vivid narrative with the snobbery and charlatanism of these perpetual references, the opponent takes it for granted that you have not kept your notes and cannot answer him; and indeed, as a rule, you have not kept your notes and you cannot answer him.

For the most part, these enormous, foolish, ill-motivated accretions are honest enough in their actual references, for the greater part of our modern historians who use them are so incapable of judgement and so lacking in style, so averse from what Rossetti called 'fundamental brainwork', that they have not the power to do more than shovel all their notes on you in a lump and call it history. But now and then this temptation to humbug produces its natural result, and the references are false.

The late Mr. Andrew Lang used to say that the writer who writes under the pseudonym of 'Anatole France' must have had his footnotes for his *Life of Joan of Arc* done by contract. The idea opens up a wide horizon. A man of name would sit down to write a general history of something of which he had a smattering, and would then turn it over to a poor man who would hack for him in the British Museum and find references—and they could always be found—for pretty well any statement he had chosen to make.

At any rate, in this particular case of Anatole France's *Joan of Arc* Andrew Lang amply proved that the writer had never read his original authorities, though he quoted them in heaps.

And that reminds me of another footnote vice (the subject is a perfect jungle of vices!), which is the habit of copying other people's footnotes. I did it myself when I was young; I was lured into it by Oxford and I ask pardon of God and man. It is very common, and a little ingenuity will hide one's tracks. A learned man who was also civilized



and ironical—but much too sparing in wine—told me once this amusing story.

He was reading up an economic question, and he found himself perpetually referred to a pamphlet of the late seventeenth century wherein was a certain economic statement upon the point of his research. Book after book referred him to this supposed statement, but he being, as I have said, a learned, civilized, and ironical man (though too sparing in wine) concluded from his general knowledge—and very few learned men have general knowledge—that, in the words of the Old Kent Road murderer, 'There must be some mistake.' He couldn't believe any seventeenth-century pamphlet had said what this oft-quoted pamphlet was made responsible for.

He proceeded to look up the pamphlet, the references to which followed him about like a dog through all his research. He found there were two copies—and only two. One was in a certain public library, the other in a rich man's house. The public library was far off, and the rich man was nearer by—an hour's journey in the train. So he wrote to the rich man and asked him whether he might look at the pamphlet in the library which his ancestors had accumulated, but to which the rich man had added nothing, being indeed indifferent to reading and writing. The rich man very politely answered that his library had unfortunately been burnt down, and that the pamphlet had been burnt with it. Whereupon the learned man was at the pains of taking a long journey to consult the copy kept in the public library. He discovered two things: (*a*) that the copy had never been used at all—it was uncut; (*b*) that the references always given had hardly any relation to the actual text. Then did he, as is the habit of all really learned people, go and waste a universe of energy in working out the textual criticism of the corruption, and he proved that the last time anyone had, with his own eyes, really seen that particular passage, instead of merely pretending that he had seen it, was in the year 1738



—far too long ago! Ever since then the reference had been first corrupted and then copied and recopied in corrupted form by the University charlatans.

But I myself have had a similar experience (as the silent man said when his host had described at enormous length his adventure with the tiger). I was pursued for years by a monstrous piece of nonsense about some Papal Bull forbidding chemical research: and the footnote followed that lie. It was from Avignon that the thing was supposed to have come. It seemed to me about as probable as that Napoleon the Third should have forbidden the polka. At last—God knows how unwillingly!—I looked the original Bull up in the big collection printed at Lyons. It was as I had suspected. The Bull had nothing whatever to do with chemical experiments. It said not a word against the honest man who produces a poison or an explosive mixture to the greater happiness of the race. It left the whole world free to pour one colourless liquid into another colourless liquid and astonish the polytechnic with their fumes. What it *did* say was that if anybody went about collecting lead and brass under the promise of secretly turning them into silver and gold, that man was a liar and must pay a huge fine, and that those whom he had gulled must have their metal restored to them—which seems sound enough.

Here you will say to me what is said to every reformer: ‘What would you put in its place if you killed the little footnote, all so delicate and compact? How could you replace it? How can we know that the historian is telling the truth unless he gives us his references? It is true that it prevents history from being properly written and makes it, to-day, unreadable. It is true that it has become charlatan and therefore historically almost useless. But you must have some guarantee of original authority. How will you make sure of it?’

I should answer, let a man put his footnotes in very small



print indeed at the end of a volume, and, if necessary, let him give specimens rather than a complete list. For instance, let a man who writes history as it should be written—with all the physical details in evidence, the weather, the dress, colours, everything—write on for the pleasure of his reader and not for his critic. But let him take sections here and there, and in an appendix show the critic how it is being done. Let him keep his notes and challenge criticism. I think he will be secure. He will not be secure from the anger of those who cannot write clearly, let alone vividly, and who have never in their lives been able to resurrect the past, but he will be secure from their destructive effect.



CAEDWALLA, a prince out of Wales (though some deny it), wandered in the Andredsweald. He was nineteen years of age and his heart was full of anger for wrong that had been done him by men of his own blood. For he was rightfully heir to the throne of the kingdom of Sussex, but he was kept from it by the injustice of men.

A retinue went with him of that sort which will always follow adventure and exile. These, the rich of the sea-coast and of the Gwent called broken men; but they loved their Lord. So he went hunting, feeding upon what he slew, and proceeding from steading to steading in the sparse woods of Andred where is sometimes an open heath, and sometimes a mile of oak, and often a clay swamp, and, seen from little lifted knolls of sand where the broom grows and the gorse, the Downs to the south like a wall.

As he so wandered upon one day, he came upon another man of a very different fashion, for Caedwalla would have nothing to do with the Cross of Christ, nor with the customs of the towns, nor with the talk of foreign men. But this man was a bishop wandering, and his name was Wilfrid. He also had his little retinue, and, by an accident of his office or of his exile, he had proceeded to a steading in the heaths and woods of the Weald where also was Caedwalla: so they met. The pride and the bearing of Wilfrid, seeing that he was of a Roman town and an officer of the State, and a bishop to boot, nay, a bishop above bishops, was not the pride Caedwalla loved, and the young man bore himself with another sort of pride, which was that of the mountains and of pagan men. Nevertheless Wilfrid put before him, with Roman rhetoric and with uplifted hands, the story of our Lord, and Caedwalla, keeping his face set during all that



recital, could not forbid this story to sink into the depths of his heart, where for many years it remained, and did no more than remain.

The kingdom of Sussex, cultivated by men of various kinds, received Wilfrid the Bishop wherever he went. He did many things that do not here concern me, and his chief work was to make the rich towns of the sea-plain and of Chichester and of Lewes and of Arundel, and of the steadings of the Weald, and of the wealden markets also, Christian men; for he showed them that it was a mean thing to go about in a hairy way like pagans, unacquainted with letters, and of imperfect ability in the making of raiment or the getting of victuals. Indeed, as I have written in another place, it was St. Wilfrid who taught the King of Sussex and his men how to catch fish in nets. They revered him everywhere, and when they had given up their shameful barbarism and decently accepted the rules of life and the religion of it, they pressed upon St. Wilfrid that he should found a bishopric, and that it should have a cathedral and a see (all of which things he had explained to them), and he did this on Selsey Bill: but to-day the sea has swallowed all.

Time passed, and the young man Caedwalla, still a very young man in the twenties, came to his own, and he sat on the throne that was rightfully his in Chichester and he ruled all Sussex to its utmost boundaries. And he was king of much more, as history shows, but all the while he proudly refused in his young man's heart the raiment and the manner of the thing which he had hated in his exile, nor would he accept the Latin prayers, nor bow to the name of the Christian God.

Caedwalla, still so young but now a king, thought it shameful that he should rule no more than the empire God had given him, and he was filled with a longing to cross the sea and to conquer new land. Wherefore, whether well or ill advised, he set out to cross the sea and to conquer the



Isle of Wight, of which story said that Wight the hero had established his kingdom there in the old time before writing was, and when there were only songs. So Caedwalla and his fighting men, they landed in that island and they fought against the many inhabitants of it, and they subdued it, but in these battles Caedwalla was wounded.

It happened that the King of that island, whose name was Atwald, had two heirs, youths, whom it was pitifully hoped this conqueror would spare, for they fled up the Water to Stoneham; but a monk who served God by the ford of reeds which is near Hampton at the head of the Water, hearing that King Caedwalla (who was recovering of wounds he had had in the war with the men of Wight) had heard of the youths' hiding-place and had determined to kill them, sought the King and begged that at least they might be instructed in the Faith before they died, saying to him: 'King, though you are not of the Faith, that is no reason that you should deprive others of such a gift. Let me therefore see that these young men are instructed and baptized, after which you may exercise your cruel will.' And Caedwalla assented. These lads, therefore, were taken to a holy place up on Itchen, where they were instructed in the truths and the mysteries of religion. And while this so went forward Caedwalla would ask from time to time whether they were yet Christians.

At last they had received all the knowledge the holy men could give them and they were baptized. When they were so received into the fold Caedwalla would wait no longer but had them slain. And it is said that they went to death joyfully, thinking it to be no more than the gate of immortality.

After such deeds Caedwalla still reigned over the kingdom of Sussex and his other kingdoms, nor did he by speech or manner give the rich or poor about him to understand whether anything was passing in his heart. But while they sang Mass in the cathedral of Selsey and while still the newcomers came (now more rarely, for nearly all were enrolled):



while the new-comers came, I say, in their last numbers from the remotest parts of the forest ridge, and from the loneliest combes of the Downs to hear of Christ and his cross and his resurrection and the salvation of men, Caedwalla sat in Chichester and consulted his own heart only and was a pagan King. No one else you may say in all the land so kept himself apart.

His youth had been thus spent and he thus ruled, when as his thirtieth year approached he gave forth a decision to his nobles and to his earls and to the Welsh-speaking men and to the seafaring men and to the priests and to all his people. He said: 'I will take ship and I will go over the sea to Rome, where I may worship at the tombs of the blessed Apostles, and there I will be baptized. But since I am a king no one but the Pope shall baptize me. I will do penance for my sins. I will lift my eyes to things worthy of a man. I will put behind me what was dear to me, and I will accept that which is to come.' And as they could not alter Caedwalla in any of his previous decisions, so they could not alter him in this. But his people gave gladly for the furnishing of his journey, and all the sheep of the Downs and their fleece, and all the wheat in the clay steadings of the Weald, and the little vineyards in the priests' gardens that looked towards the sea, and the fishermen, and every sort in Sussex that sail or plough or clip or tend sheep or reap or forge iron at the hammer ponds, gave of what they had to King Caedwalla, so that he went forth with a good retinue and many provisions upon his journey to the tombs of the Apostles.

When King Caedwalla came to Rome the Pope received him and said: 'I hear that you would be instructed in the Faith.' To which King Caedwalla answered that such was his desire, and that he would crave baptism at the hands of the said Pope. And meanwhile Caedwalla took up good lodgings in Rome, gave money to the poor, and showed himself abroad as one who had come from the ends of the



earth, that is, from the kingdom of Sussex, which in those days was not yet famous. Caedwalla, now being thirty years old and having learnt what one should learn in order to receive baptism, was baptized, and they put a white robe on him which he was to wear for certain days.

King Caedwalla, when he was thus made one with the unity of Christian men, was very glad. But he also said that before he had lost that white robe so given him, death would come and take him (though he was a young man and a warrior), and that not in battle. He was certain it was so.

And so indeed it came about. For within the limit of days during which ritual demanded that the King should wear his white garment, nay, within that same week, he died.

So those boys who had found death at his hands had died after baptism, up on Itchen in the Gwent, when Caedwalla the King had journeyed out of Sussex to conquer and to hold the Wight with his spear and his sword and his shield, and his captains and his armoured men.

Now that you have done reading this story you may think that I have made it up or that it is a legend or that it comes out of some story-teller's book. Learn, therefore, that it is plain history, like the battle of Waterloo or the Licensing Bill (differing from the chronicle only in this, that I have put living words into the mouths of men), and be assured that the history of England is a very wonderful thing.



## On Historical Evidence    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪    ∪

THE last book to be published upon the last Dauphin of France set me thinking upon what seems to me the chief practical science in which modern men should secure themselves. I mean the science of history—and in this science almost all lies in the appreciation of evidence, for one of the chief particular problems presented to the student of history at the present moment is whether the Dauphin did or did not survive his imprisonment in the Temple.

Let me first say why, to so many of us, the science of history and the appreciation of the evidence upon which it depends is of the first moment. It is because, short of vision or revelation, history is our only extension of human experience. It is true that a philosophy common to all citizens is necessary for a State if it is to live—but short of that necessity the next most necessary factor is a knowledge of the stuff of mankind: of how men act under certain conditions and impulses. This knowledge may be acquired, and is in some measure, during the experience of one wise lifetime, but it is indefinitely extended by the accumulation of experience which history affords.

And what history so gives us is always of immediate and practical moment.

For instance, men sometimes speak with indifference of the rival theories as to the origin of European land tenure; they talk as though it were a mere academic debate whether the conception of private property in land arose comparatively late among Europeans or was native and original in our race. But you have only to watch a big popular discussion on that very great and at the present moment very living issue, the moral right to the private ownership in land, to see how heavily the historic argument weighs with



every type of citizen. The instinct that gives that argument weight is a sound one, and not less sound in those who have least studied the matter than in those who have most studied it; for if our race from its immemorial origins has desired to own land as a private thing side by side with communal tenures, then it is pretty certain that we shall not modify that intention, however much we change our laws. If, on the other hand, it could be shown that before the advent of a complex civilization Europeans had no conception of private property in land, but treated land as a thing necessarily and always communal, then you could ascribe modern Socialist theories with regard to the land to that general movement of harking back to the origins which Europe has been assisting at through over a hundred years of revolution and of change.

It sounds cynical, but it is perfectly true, that much the largest factor in the historical conception of men is assertion. It is literally true that when men (with the exception of a very small proportion of scholars who are also intelligent) consider the past, the picture on which they dwell is a picture conveyed to them wholly by authority and by unquestioned authority. There was never a time when the original sources of history were more easily to be consulted by the plain man; but whether because of their very number, or because the habit is not yet formed, or because there are traditions of imaginary difficulty surrounding such reading, original sources were perhaps never less familiar to fairly educated opinion than they are to-day; and therefore no type of book gives more pleasure when one comes across it than those little cheap books, now becoming fairly numerous, in which the original sources, and the original sources alone, are put before the reader. Mr. Rait has already done such work in connexion with Mary Queen of Scots, and Mr. Archer did it admirably in connexion with the Third Crusade.

But apart from the importance of consulting original



sources—which is like hearing the very witnesses themselves in court—there is a factor in historical judgement which by some unhappy accident is peculiarly lacking in the professional historian. It is a factor to which no particular name can be attached, though it may be called a department of common sense. But it is a mental power or attitude easily recognizable in those who possess it, and perhaps atrophied by the very atmosphere of the study. It goes with the open air with a general knowledge of men and with that rapid recognition of the way in which things 'fit in' which is necessarily developed by active life.

For instance, when you know the pace at which Harold marched down from the north to Hastings you recognize, if you use that factor of historic judgement of which I spake, that the affair was not barbaric. There must have been fairly good roads, and there must have been a high organization of transport. You have only to consider for a moment what a column looks like, even if it be only a brigade, to see the truth of that. Again, this type of judgement forbids anyone who uses it to ascribe great popular movements (great massacres, great turmoils, and so forth) to craft. It is a very common thing, especially in modern history, to lay such things to the power of one or two wealthy or one or two bloody leaders, but you have only to think for a few moments of what a mob is to see the falsity of that. Craft can harness this sort of explosive force, it can control it, or persuade it, or canalize it to certain issues, but it cannot create it.

Again, this sort of sense easily recognizes in historic types the parallels of modern experience. It avoids the error of thinking history a mistake and making of the men and women who appear there something remote from humanity, extreme, and either stilted or grandiose.

In aid of this last feature in historical judgement there is nothing of such permanent value as a portrait. Obtain your



conception (as, indeed, most boys do) of the English early sixteenth century from a text, then go and live with the Holbeins for a week and see what an enormously greater thing you will possess at the end of it. It is indeed one of the misfortunes of European history that from the fifth century to at least the eleventh we are, so far as Western European history is concerned, deprived of portraits. And by an interesting parallel the writers of the dark time seemed to have had neither the desire nor the gift of vivid description. Consider the dreariness of the hagiographers, every one of them boasting the noble rank and the conventional status of his hero, and you may say not one giving the least conception of the man's personality. You have the great Gallo-Roman noble family of Ferreolus running down the centuries from the Decline of the Empire to the climax of Charlemagne. Many of those names stand for some most powerful individuality, yet all we have is a formula, a lineage, with symbols and names in the place of living beings, and even that established only by careful work, picking out and sifting relationships from various lives. The men of that time did not even think to tell us that there was such a thing as a family tradition, nor did it seem important to them to establish its Roman origin and its long succession in power.

Next it must be protested that the smallness and particularity of the questions upon which historical discussion rages are no proof either of its general purposelessness nor of *their* insignificance. All advance of knowledge proceeds in this fashion. Physical science affords innumerable examples of the way in which progress has depended upon a curiosity directed towards apparently insignificant things, and there is something in the mind which compels it to select a narrow field for the exercise of its acutest powers. Moreover, special points, discussion upon which must evidently be lengthy and may be indefinite, are peculiarly attractive to just that kind of man who by a love of prolonged research



enlarges the bounds of knowledge and at the same time strengthens and improves for his fellows by continual exercise all the instruments of their common trade. Take, for instance, this case of the little Dauphin, Louis XVII. It really does not matter to-day whether the boy got away or whether he died in prison. It does not prolong the line of the Capetians—the heir to that is present in the Duke of Orleans. It does not even affect our view of any other considerable part of history—save possibly the policy of Louis XVIII—and it is of no direct interest to our pockets or to our affections. Yet the masses of work which have accumulated round that one doubt have solved twenty other doubts. They have illuminated all the close of the Terror; they are beginning to make us understand that most difficult piece of political psychology, the reaction of Thermidor, and with it how Europeans lose their balance and regain it in the course of their quasi-religious wars; for all our wars have something in them of religion.

Three elements appear to enter into the judgement of history. First, there is the testimony of human witnesses; next, there are the non-human boundaries wherein the action took place, boundaries which, by all our experience, impose fixed limits to action; thirdly, there is that indefinable thing, that mystic power, which all nations deriving from the theology of the Western Church have agreed to call, with the schoolman, *common sense*; a general appreciation which transcends particular appreciations and which can integrate the differentials of evidence. Of this last it is quite impossible to afford a test or to construct a measure; its presence in an argument is none the less as readily felt as fresh air in a room; without it nothing is convincing however laboured, with it, even though it rely upon slight evidence, one has the feeling of walking on a firm road. But it must be ‘common sense’—it must be of the sort, that is, which *is* common to man various and general, and it is in this perhaps that history



suffers most from the charlatanism and ritual common to all great matters.

Men will have pomp and mystery surrounding important things, and therefore the historians must, consciously or unconsciously, tend to strut, to quote solemn authorities in support, and to make out the vulgar unworthy of their confidence. Hence, by the way, the plague of footnotes.

These had their origin in two sources: the desire to show that one was honest and to prove it by a reference; the desire to elucidate some point which it was not easy to elucidate in the text itself without making the sentence too elaborate and clumsy. Either use may be seen at its best in Gibbon. With the last generation they have served mainly, and sometimes merely, for ritual adornment and terror, not to make clearer or more honest, but to deceive. Thus Taine in his monstrously false history of the Revolution revels in footnotes; you have but to examine a batch of them with care to turn them completely against his own conclusions—they are only put there as a sort of spiked paling to warn off trespassers. Or, again, M. Thibaut, who writes under the name of 'Anatole France', gives footnotes by the score in his romance of Joan of Arc, apparently not even caring to examine whether they so much as refer to his text, let alone support it. They seem to have been done by contract.

Another ailment in this department is the negative one, whereby an historian will leave out some aspect which to him, cramped in a study, seems unimportant, but which any plain man moving in the world would have told him to be the essential aspect of the whole matter. For instance, when Napoleon left Madrid on his forced march to intercept Sir John Moore before that general should have reached Benevente, he thought Moore was at Valladolid, when as a fact he was at Sahagun. In Mr. Oman's history of the Peninsular War the error is put thus: 'Napoleon had not the comparatively easy task of cutting the road between



Valladolid and Astorga, but the much harder one of intercepting that between Sahagun and Astorga.'

Why is this egregious nonsense? The facts are right and so are the dates and the names, yet it makes one blush for Oxford history. Why? Because the all-important element of *distance* is omitted. The very first question a plain man would ask about the case would be, 'What were the distances involved?' The academic historian doesn't know, or, at least, doesn't say; yet without an appreciation of the distances the statement has no value. As a fact the distances were such that in the first case (supposing Moore had been at Valladolid) Napoleon would have had to cover nearly three miles to Moore's one to intercept him—an almost superhuman task. In the second case (Moore being as a fact at Sahagun) he would have had to go *over four miles* to his opponent's one—an absolutely impossible feat.

To march *three* miles to the enemy's *one* is what Mr. Oman calls 'a comparatively easy task'; to march *four* to his one is what Mr. Oman calls a 'much harder' task; and to write like that is what an informed critic calls bad history.

The other two factors in an historical judgement can be more easily measured.

The non-human elements which, as I have said, are irremovable (save to miracle), are topography, climate, season, local physical conditions, and so forth. They have two valuable characters in aid of history; the first is that they correct the errors of human memory and support the accuracy of details; the second is that they enable us to complete a picture. We can by their aid 'see' the physical framework in which an action took place, and such a landscape helps the judgement of things past as it does of things contemporary. Thus the map, the date, the soil, the contours of Crécy field make the traditional spot at which the King of Bohemia fell doubtful; the same factors make it certain that Drouet did not plunge haphazard through Argonne on the night of



June 21, 1791, but that he must have gone by one path—which can be determined.

Or, again, take that prime question, why the Prussians did not charge at Valmy. On their failure to do so all the success of the Revolution turned. A man may read Dumouriez, Kellermann, Pully, Botidoux, Massenback, Goethe—there are fifty eye-witnesses at least whose evidence we can collect, and I defy anyone to decide. (Brunswick himself never knew.) But go to that roll of land between Valmy and the high road; go after three days' rain as the allies did, and you will immediately learn. That field between the heights of 'The Moon' and the site of old Valmy mill, which is as hard as a brick in summer (when the experts visit it), is a marsh of the worst under an autumn drizzle; no one could have charged.

As for human testimony, three things appear: first, that the witness is not, as in a law court, circumscribed. His relation may vary infinitely in degree of proximity of time or space to the action, from that of an eye-witness writing within the hour to that of a partisan writing at tenth hand a lifetime after. That question of proximity comes first, from the known action of the human mind whereby it transforms colours and changes remembered things. Next there is the character of the witness *for the purposes of his testimony*. Historians write, too often, as though virtue—or wealth (with which they often confound it)—were the test. It is not, short of a known motive for lying; a murderer or a thief casually witnessing to a thing with which he is familiar is worth more than the best man witnessing in a matter which he understands ill. It was this error which ruined Croker's essay on Charlotte Robespierre's Memoirs. Croker thought, perhaps wisely, that all radicals were scoundrels; he could not accept her editor's evidence, and (by the way) the view of this amateur collector without a tincture of historical scholarship actually imposed itself on Europe for nearly seventy years!



And the third character in the witness is support: the support upon converging lines of other human testimony, most of it indifferent, some (this is essential) casual and by the way—deprived therefore of motive.

When I shall find these canons satisfied to oppose the strong probability and tradition of the Dauphin's death in prison I shall doubt that death, but not before.



IF there is one thing that people who are not Catholic have gone wrong upon more than another in the intellectual things of life, it is the conception of a Personality. They are muddled about it where their own little selves are concerned, they misappreciate it when they deal with the problems of society, and they have a very weak hold of it when they consider (if they do consider) the nature of Almighty God.

Now, personality is everything. It was a Personal Will that made all things, visible and invisible. Our hope of immortality resides in this, that we are persons, and half our frailties proceed from a misapprehension of the awful responsibilities which personality involves or a cowardly ignorance of its powers of self-government.

The hundred and one errors which this main error leads to include a bad error on the nature of history. Your modern non-Catholic or anti-Catholic historian is always misunderstanding, under-estimating, or muddling the role played in the affairs of men by great and individual Personalities. That is why he is so lamentably weak upon the function of legend; that is why he makes a fetish of documentary evidence and has no grip upon the value of tradition. For traditions spring from some personality invariably, and the function of legend, whether it be a rigidly true legend or one tinged with make-believe, is to interpret Personality. Legends have vitality and continue, because in their origin they so exactly serve to explain or illustrate some personal character in a man which no cold statement could give.

Now St. Patrick, the whole story and effect of him, is a matter of Personality. There was once—twenty or thirty years ago—a whole school of dunderheads who wondered whether St. Patrick ever existed, because the mass of legends



surrounding his name troubled them. How on earth (one wonders) do such scholars consider their fellow-beings! Have they ever seen a crowd cheering a popular hero, or noticed the expression upon men's faces when they spoke of some friend of striking power recently dead? A great growth of legends around a man is the very best proof you could have not only of his existence but of the fact that he was an origin and a beginning, and that things sprang from his will or his vision. There were some who seemed to think it a kind of favour done to the indestructible body of Irish Catholicism when Mr. Bury wrote his learned Protestant book upon St. Patrick. It was a critical and very careful bit of work, and was deservedly praised; but the favour done us I could not see! It is all to the advantage of non-Catholic history that it should be sane, and that a great Protestant historian should make true history out of a great historical figure was a very good sign. It was a long step back towards common sense compared with the German absurdities which had left their victims doubting almost all the solid foundation of the European story; but as for us Catholics, we had no need to be told it. Not only was there a St. Patrick in history, but there is a St. Patrick on the shores of his eastern sea and throughout all Ireland to-day. It is a presence that stares you in the face, and physically almost haunts you. Let a man sail along the Leinster coast on such a day as renders the Wicklow Mountains clear up-weather behind him, and the Mourne Mountains perhaps in storm, lifted clearly above the sea down the wind. He is taking some such course as that on which St. Patrick sailed, and if he will land from time to time from his little boat at the end of each day's sailing, and hear Mass in the morning before he sails farther northward, he will know in what way St. Patrick inhabits the soil which he rendered sacred.

We know that among the marks of holiness is the working of miracles. Ireland is the greatest miracle any saint ever



worked. It is a miracle and a nexus of miracles. Among other miracles it is a nation raised from the dead.

The preservation of the Faith by the Irish is an historical miracle comparable to nothing else in Europe. There never was, and please God never can be, so prolonged and insanely violent a persecution of men by their fellow-men as was undertaken for centuries against the Faith in Ireland: and it has completely failed. I know of no example in history of failure following upon such effort. It had behind it in combination the two most powerful of the evil passions of men, terror and greed. And so amazing is it that they did not attain their end, that perpetually as one reads one finds the authors of the dreadful business now at one period, now at another, assuming with certitude that their success is achieved. Then, after centuries, it is almost suddenly perceived—and in our own time—that it has not been achieved and never will be.

What a complexity of strange coincidences combined, coming out of nothing as it were, advancing like spirits summoned on to the stage, all to effect this end! Think of the American Colonies; with one little exception they were perhaps the most completely non-Catholic society of their time. Their successful rebellion against the mother country meant many things, and led to many prophecies. Who could have guessed that one of its chief results would be the furnishing of a free refuge for the Irish?

The famine, all human opinion imagined, and all human judgement was bound to conclude, was a mortal wound, coming in as the ally of the vile persecution I have named. It has turned out the very contrary. From it there springs indirectly the dispersion, and that power which comes from unity in dispersion, of Irish Catholicism.

Who, looking at the huge financial power that dominated Europe, and England in particular, during the youth of our own generation, could have dreamt that in any corner of



Europe, least of all in the poorest and most ruined corner of Christendom, an effective resistance could be raised?

Behind the enemies of Ireland, furnishing them with all their modern strength, was that base and secret master of modern things, the usurer. He it was far more than the gentry of the island who demanded toll, and, through the mortgages on the Irish estates, had determined to drain Ireland as he has drained and rendered desert so much else. Is it not a miracle that he has failed?

Ireland is a nation risen from the dead; and to raise one man from the dead is surely miraculous enough to convince one of the power of a great spirit. This miracle, as I am prepared to believe, is the last and the greatest of St. Patrick's.

When I was last in Ireland, I bought in the town of Wexford a coloured picture of St. Patrick which greatly pleased me. Most of it was green in colour, and St. Patrick wore a mitre and had a crosier in his hand. He was turning into the sea a number of nasty reptiles: snakes and toads and the rest. I bought this picture because it seemed to me as modern a piece of symbolism as ever I had seen: and that was why I bought it for my children and for my home.

There was a few pence change, but I did not want it. The person who sold me the picture said they would spend the change in candles for St. Patrick's altar. So St. Patrick is still alive.

## The Roman Roads in Picardy



IF a man were asked where he would find upon the map the sharpest impress of Rome and of the memories of Rome, and where he would most easily discover in a few days on foot the foundations upon which our civilization still rests, he might, in proportion to his knowledge of history and of Europe, be puzzled to reply. He might say that a week along the wall from Tyne to Solway would be the answer; or a week in the great Roman cities of Provence with their triumphal arches and their vast arenas and their Roman stone cropping out everywhere: in old quays, in ruined bridges, in the very pavement of the streets they use to-day, and in the columns of their living churches.

Now I was surprised to find myself after many years of dabbling in such things, furnishing myself the answer in quite a different place. It was in Picardy during the late manœuvres of the French Army that, in the intervals of watching those great buzzing flies, the aeroplanes, and in the intervals of long tramps after the regiments or of watching the massed guns, the necessity for perpetually consulting the map brought home to me for the first time this truth—that Picardy is the province—or to be more accurate, Picardy with its marches in the Île de France, the edge of Normandy and the edge of Flanders—which retains to-day the most vivid impress of Rome. For though the great buildings are lacking, and the Roman work, which must here have been mainly of brick, has crumbled, and though I can remember nothing upstanding and patently of the Empire between the gate of Rheims and the frontier of Artois, yet one feature—the Roman road—is here so evident, so multiple, and so enduring that it makes up for all the rest.

One discovers the old roads upon the map, one after the



other, with a sort of surprise. The scheme develops before one as one looks, and always when one thinks one has completed the web another and yet another straight arrow of a line reveals itself across the page.

The map is a sort of palimpsest. A mass of fine modern roads, a whole red blur of lanes and local ways, the big, rare black lines of the railway—these are the recent writing, as it were; but underneath the whole, more and more apparent and in greater and greater numbers as one learns to discover them, are the strict, taut lines which Rome stretched over all those plains.

There is something most fascinating in noting them, and discovering them one after the other. For they need discovering. No one of them is still in complete use. The greater part must be pieced together from lengths of lanes which turn into broad roads, and then suddenly sink again into footpaths, rights of way, or green forest rides.

Often, as with our rarer Roman roads in England, all trace of the thing disappears under the plough or in the soft crossing of the river valleys; one marks them by the straightness of their alinement, by the place-names which lie upon them (the repeated name *Estrée*, for instance, which is like the place-name 'street' upon the Roman roads of England); by the recovery of them after a gap; by the discoveries which local archaeology has made.

Different men have different pastimes, and I dare say that most of those who read this will wonder that such a search should be a pastime for any man, but I confess it is a pastime for me. To discover these things, to recreate them, to dig out on foot the base upon which two thousand years of history repose, is the most fascinating kind of travel.

And then, the number of them! You may take an oblong of country with Maubeuge at one corner, Pontoise at another, Yvetot and some frontier town such as Furnes for the other two corners, and in that stretch of country a



hundred and fifty miles by perhaps two hundred, you can build up a scheme of Roman ways almost as complete as the scheme of the great roads to-day.

That one which most immediately strikes the eye is the great line which darts upon Rouen from Paris.

Twice broken at the crossing of the river valleys, and lost altogether in the last twelve miles before the capital of Normandy, it still stands on the modern map a great modern road with every aspect of purpose and of intention in its going.

From Amiens again they radiate out, these roads, some, like the way to Cambray, in use every mile; some, like the old marching road to the sea, to the *Portus Itius*, to Boulogne, a mere lane often wholly lost and never used as a great modern road. This was the way along which the French feudal cavalry trailed to the disaster of Crécy, and just beyond Crécy it goes and loses itself in that exasperating but fascinating manner which is the whole charm of Roman roads wherever the hunter finds them. You may lay a ruler along this old forgotten track, all the way past Domqueur, Novelle (which is called *Novelle-en-Chaussée*, that is *Novelle* on the paved road), on past Estrée (where from the height you overlook the battlefield of Crécy), and that ruler so lying on your map points right at Boulogne Harbour, thirty odd miles away—and in all those thirty odd remaining miles I could not find another yard of it. But what an interest! What a hobby to develop! There is nothing like it in all the kinds of hunting that have ever been invented for filling up the whole of the mind. True, you will get no sauce of danger, but, on the other hand, you will hunt for weeks and weeks, and you will come back year after year and go on with your hunting, and sometimes you actually find—which is more than can be said for hunting some animals in the Weald.

How was it lost, this great main road of Europe, this



marching road of the legions, linking up Gaul and Britain, the way that Hadrian went, and the way down which the usurper Constantine III must have come during that short adventure of his which lends such a romance to the end of the Empire? One cannot conceive why it should have disappeared. It is a sunken way down the hill-side across the light railway which serves Crécy, it gets vaguer and vaguer, for all the world like those ridges upon the chalk that mark the Roman roads in England, and then it is gone. It leaves you pointing, I say, at that distant harbour, thirty odd miles off, but over all those miles it has vanished. The ghost of the legends cannot march along it any more. In one place you find a few yards of it about three miles south and east of Montreuil. It may be that the little lane leading into Estrée shows where it crossed the valley of the Cauche, but it is all guess-work, and therefore very proper to the huntsman.

Then there is that unbroken line by which St. Martin came, I think, when he rode into Amiens, and at the gate of the town cut his cloak in two to cover the beggar. It drives across country for Roye and on to Noyon, the old centre of the Kings. It is a great modern road all the way, and it stretches before you mile after mile after mile, until suddenly, without explanation and for no reason, it ends sharply, like the life of a man. It ends on the slopes of the hill called Choisy, at the edge of the wood which is there. And seek as you will, you will never find it again.

From that road also, near Amiens, branches out another, whose object was St. Quentin, first as a great high road, lost in the valley of the Somme, a lesser road again, still in one strict alinement, it reaches on to within a mile of Vermand, and there it stops dead. I do not think that between Vermand and St. Quentin you will find it. Go out north-westward from Vermand and walk perhaps five miles, or seven: there is no trace of a road, only the rare country lanes winding in and out, and the open plough of the rolling land.

But continue by your compass so and you will come (suddenly again and with no apparent reason for its abrupt origin) upon the dead straight line that ran from the capital of the Nervii, three days' march and more, and pointing all the time straight at Vermand.

And so it is throughout the province and its neighbourhood. Here and there, as at Bavai, a great capital has decayed. Here and there (but more rarely), a town wholly new has sprung up since the Romans, but the plan of the country is the same as that which they laid down, and the roads as you discover them, mark it out and establish it. The armies that you see marching to-day in their manœuvres follow for half a morning the line which was taken by the Legions.



## The Canvasser



IN that part of the Garden of Eden which lies somewhat to the south-west of the centre thereof the weather, during the recent election which was held there, was bad. It blew, it rained, it hailed, it snowed, and all this was on account of the great comet, of which the people of that region said proudly to strangers, 'Have you seen our comet?' Imagining, with I know not how much justice, that this celestial phenomenon was local rather than national or imperial.

The Garden of Eden being mainly of a clay soil, large parts of it were flooded, and a Canvasser (a draper by profession and a Gentleman from London by birth), unacquainted as he was with the Garden of Eden, thought it a foul place, and picked his way without pleasure. He went down a lane the like of which he did not even know to exist in England (for it was what we call in the Garden of Eden a 'green lane', and only those learned in the place could get along it at all during the floods).

I say he went down this lane, turned back, took a circum-bendibus over some high but abominably sticky ploughed fields, and turned up with more of English earth than most citizens can boast at the door of the Important Cottage. He had been given his instructions carefully, and he was sure of the place. He swung off several pounds of clay from his boots to the right and to the left, and then it struck him that he did not know how to accost a cottage door. There was no knocker and there was no bell. But he had had plenty of proof and instruction dinned into him as to the importance of that cottage, so at last he made up his mind to do something bold and unconventional, and he knocked at it with his knuckles.

Hardly had he done so when he heard within a loud series



of syllables proceeding from two human mouths and consisting mainly of the broad A in the vowels and of Z by way of the consonants. At last the door was opened a little way and a rather forbidding-looking old woman, short, fat, but energetic, looked out at him through the crack. She continued to look at him curiously, for it is good manners in the Garden of Eden to allow the guest to speak first.

When the Canvasser grasped this from the great length of silence which he had to endure, he said with the utmost politeness, taking off his hat in a graceful manner and speaking with the light accent of the cultured:

‘Is your husband in, madam?’

By way of answer she shut the door upon him and disappeared, and the Canvasser, not yet angry, marvelled at the ways of the Garden of Eden. In a few moments she was back again; she opened the door a little wider just wide enough to let him come in, and said:

‘Ye can see un: but he bain’t my husband. He wor my sister’s husband like.’ As she said this she kept her eyes fixed upon the stranger, noting every movement of his face and of his body, until she got him into the large old kitchen. There she put a chair for him, and he sat down.

He found himself opposite a very, very old man, much older than the old woman, sitting in a patched easy chair and staring merrily but fixedly at the fire.

The very, very old man said: ‘Marnin’.

There was a pause. The Canvasser felt nervous. The old, fat, but energetic woman, still scowling somewhat and still fixedly regarding the stranger, said:

‘I do be tellin’ of un you bain’t my husband, you be poor Martha’s husband that was. Ar!’

‘Ar!’ said the old man, by way of corroboration; and the smile—if it were a smile—upon his drawn and wrinkled face became more mysterious than ever.

The Canvasser coughed a little. ‘I’ve brought bad weather



with me,' he said, by way of opening the delicate conversation.

'Arl!' said the old man. 'You ain't brought un nayther! Naw . . . Bin ere a sennight com Vriday . . .' Then he added more reflectively, and as though he were already passing into another world, while he stared at the fire: 'You ain't brought un nayther; naw!'

'Well,' said the stranger gallantly, though a little put out, 'I'm sure I should have been sorry to have brought it.'

'Ar, so you may zay! Main sorry I lay,' said the old man, and went off into a rattle of laughter which ended in a violent fit of coughing. But even as he coughed he wagged his head from side to side, relishing the joke immensely, and repeating it several times to himself in the intervals of his spasms.

'A lot of water lying about,' said the Canvasser, hoping to start some vein at least which would lead somewhere.

'Mubbe zo, mubbe no,' said the Ancient, like a true peasant, glancing sideways for the first time at his visitor and quickly withdrawing his eyes again. 'Thur be mar watter zome plaa-ces nor others. . . . Zo they tell,' he concluded, for fear of committing himself. Then he added: 'I ain't bin out mesel'.'

'He's got rheumatics chronic,' said the sister-in-law, standing by and watching them both with equal disapproval.

'Arl!' said the Ancient. 'Arl ower mel'

The Canvasser despaired. He took the plunge. He said as pleasantly as he could: 'I've come to ask you how you're going to vote, Mr. Layton.'

'Ow I be whaat?' answered his host with a look of extreme cunning and affecting a sudden deafness as he put his left hand to his shrivelled ear and leaned towards the Londoner.

'How you were going to vote, Mr. Layton,' said the Canvasser, still good-humoured, but a little more rosy than before, and leaning forward and speaking in a louder tone.



‘Ow I were voattun?’ answered the aged Layton with a touch of indignation in his cracked tones, ‘I ain’t voättud ’tarl yet!’

‘No, no, Mr. Layton,’ said the Canvasser, relieved at any rate to have got to the subject. ‘What I meant was how are you going to vote?’

‘Oo! Ar!’ quickly caught up the peasant. ‘If ye’d zed that furst orf, mebbe I’d a tow’d ’ee!’ He gave another little cackle of laughter and looked into the fire.

‘It is a very important election, Mr. Layton,’ said the Canvasser solemnly. ‘A great deal hangs on it.’

‘Doän you be worritin un, young man,’ said the sister-in-law with a touch of menace in her tone, her arms akimbo and her attitude sturdy.

‘There do be zome,’ began the Ancient, absolutely off his own, and, so far as the bewildered Londoner could understand, entirely irrelevantly—‘there do be zome as ave a bit of money lay by, an’ there do be zome as as none. Ar! Them as as none kin do without un.’ He laughed again, this time rather unpleasantly, and more shortly than before.

There was an awkward silence. Then in a louder voice and at a higher pitch he took up his tale again. ‘I mind my feythur saäying when I wor furst r’k-moinding, feythur says to me, “Ar, you moind rooks and you get your farp’nce when Farmer Mouwen give it ’ee, and you bring it straäght whome t’ me, zame as I tell ’ee.”’

This reminiscence concluded, the old man repeated his formula to the effect that there were some who had money laid by, others who had none, and that those who had none would have to do without that commodity. Of this sentiment his sister-in-law, by a slight nod, expressed her full approval. Her lips were firmer set than ever, and she was positively glaring at her guest.

The Canvasser began to shift uneasily. ‘Well, I put it



straight, Mr. Layton,' he said—'will you vote for Mr. Richards?'

'Ar! Ye can putt un straäght,' answered the Ancient, with a look of preternatural cunning, 'and ah can answer un straäght, an wow! ye'd be none wiser. . . . Ar! reckon t' answer any man straäght 's any man there be ereabouts, naabur, nor no naabur! And zo I tell un.'

'That's right,' said his sister-in-law, approvingly, 'and so 'e tell 'ee!' She was beginning to look actually threatening, but the Canvasser had not yet got his answer.

'We really do hope that we can hear you are going to vote for Mr. Richards,' he said pleadingly. 'The action of the Government——'

'Ar, zo I do ear say,' said the old man, chuckling over some profound thought. 'And Mas'r Willum 'e do zay thaät too, though 'e be tother side.' He wagged his head twice with the wise subtlety of age. 'Ar now, which way be I going to voät? Ar? Thaät's what many on us ud like t' know!'

The Canvasser began to despair. He kept his weary smile upon his face, rose from his chair, and said: 'Well, I must be going now, madam.'

'That ye must,' said the old lady cheerfully.

'Don't you let un go wi'out gi'ing un some of that wa-ine,' said the host, as he leaned forward in his chair and stirred the down fire with an old charred stick.

The woman looked at the Canvasser suspiciously and poured him out some parsnip wine, which he drank with the best grace in the world. As he lifted the glass he said, with an assumed cheerfulness: 'Well, here's to Mr. Richards!'

'Ar!' said the old man.

The old woman took the glass, wiped it carefully without washing it, put it back into the cupboard with the bottle, and turned round to continue her occupation of fixing the stranger with her eye.

‘Well, I must be gone,’ he said for the second time, and in as breezy a tone as he could command.

‘Ar, zo you zay!’ was all the reply he obtained, and he left that citizen of many years still smiling with his bony aged jaws at the down fire, and muttering again to himself that great truth about material wealth which had haunted him throughout the brief conversation.

The woman shut the door behind the Canvasser, and he was off across the fields. In the next cottage he came to he asked them which way old Layton would vote. The woman at the place answered nothing, but her son, a very tall and silent young man with a soft nascent beard, who was stacking wood to the leeward of the house, smiled secretly and said:

‘Ar!’



## ‘King Lear’    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

THE great unity which was built up two thousand years ago and was called Christendom in its final development split and broke in pieces. The various civilizations of its various provinces drifted apart, and it will be for the future historian to say at what moment the isolation of each from all was farthest pushed. It is certain that that point is passed.

In the task of reuniting what was broken—it is the noblest work a modern man can do—the very first mechanical act must be to explain one national soul to another. That act is not final. The nations of Europe, now so divided, still have more in common than those things by which they differ, and it is certain that when they have at last revealed to them their common origin they will return to it. They will return to it, perhaps, under the pressure of war waged by some not Christian civilization, but they will return. In the meanwhile, of those acts not final, yet of immediate necessity in the task of establishing unity, is the act of introducing one national soul to another.

Now this is best accomplished in a certain way which I will describe. You will take that part in the letters of a nation which you maturely judge most or best to reflect the full national soul, with its qualities, careless of whether these be great or little; you will take such a work as reproduces for you as you read it, not only in its sentiment, but in its very rhythm, the stuff and colour of the nation; this you will present to the foreigner, who cannot understand. His efforts must be laborious, very often unfruitful, but where it is fruitful it will be of a decisive effect.

Thus let anyone take some one of the immortal things that Racine wrote and show them to an Englishman. He



will hardly ever be able to make anything of it at first. Here and there some violently emotional passage may faintly touch him, but the mass of the verse will seem to him dead. Now, if by constant reading, by association with those who know what Racine is, he at last sees him—and these changes in the mind come very suddenly—he will see into the soul of Gaul. For the converse task, to-day not equally difficult but once almost impossible, of presenting England to the French intelligence—or, indeed, to any other alien intelligence—you may choose the play *King Lear*.

That play has every quality which does reflect the soul of the community in which and for which it was written. Note a few in their order. First, it is not designed to its end; at least it is not designed accurately to its end; it is written as a play and it is meant to be acted as a play, and it is the uniform opinion of those versed in plays and in acting that in its full form it could hardly be presented, while in any form it is the hardest even of Shakespeare's plays to perform. Here you have a parallel with a thousand mighty English things to which you can turn. Is there not institution after institution to decide on, so lacking a complete fitness to its end, larger in a way than the end it is to serve, and having, as it were, a life of its own which proceeds apart from its effect? This quality which makes so many English things growths rather than instruments is most evident in the great play.

Again, it has that quality which Voltaire noted, which he thought abnormal in Shakespeare, but which is the most national characteristic in him, that a sort of formlessness, if it mars the framework of the thing and spoils it, yet also permits the exercise of an immeasurable vitality. When a man has read *King Lear* and lays down the book he is like one who has been out in one of those empty English uplands in a storm by night. It is written as though the pen bred thoughts. It is possible to conjecture as one reads, and especially in the diatribes, that the pen itself was rapid and



the brain too rapid for the pen. One feels the rush of the air. Now, this quality is to be discovered in the literature of many nations, but never with the fullness which it has in the literature of England. And note that in those phases of the national life when foreign models have constrained this instinct of expansion in English verse, they never have restrained it for long, and that even through the bonds established by those models the instinct of expansion breaks. You see it in the exuberance of Dryden and in the occasional running rhetoric of Pope, until it utterly loosens itself with the end of the eighteenth century.

The play is national again, in that permanent curiosity upon knowable things—nay, that mysterious half-knowledge of unknowable things—which, in its last forms, produced the mystic, and which is throughout history so plainly characteristic of these Northern Atlantic islands. Every play of Shakespeare builds with that material, and no writer, even of the English turn, has sent out points farther into the region of what is not known than Shakespeare has in sudden flashes of phrase. But *King Lear*, though it contains a lesser number of lines of this mystical and half-religious effect than, say, *Hamlet*, yet as a general impression is the more mystical of the two plays. The element of madness, which in *Hamlet* hangs in the background like a storm-cloud ready to break, in *King Lear* rages; and it is the use of this which lends its amazing psychical power to the play. It has been said (with no great profundity of criticism) that English fiction is chiefly remarkable for its power of particularization of character, and that where French work, for instance, will present ideas, English will present persons. The judgement is grossly insufficient, and therefore false, but it is based upon a proof which is very salient in English letters, which is that, say, in quite short and modern work the sense of complete unity deadens the English mind. The same nerve which revolts at a straight road and at a code of law revolts

against one tone of thought, and the sharp contrast of emotional character, not the dual contrast which is common to all literatures, but the multiple contrast, runs through *King Lear* and gives the work such a tone that one seems as one reads it to be moving in a cloud.

The conclusion is perhaps Shakespearean rather than English, and in a fashion escapes from any national labelling. But the note of silence which Shakespeare suddenly brings in upon the turmoil, and with which he is so fond of completing what he has done, would not be possible were not that spirit of expansion and of a kind of literary adventurousness present in all that went before.

It is indeed this that makes the play so memorable. And it may not be fantastic to repeat and expand what has been said above in other words, namely, that *King Lear* has something about him which seems to be a product of English landscape and of English weather, and if its general movement is a storm its element is one of those sudden silences that come sometimes with such magical rapidity after the booming of the wind.



## On Getting Respected in Inns and Hotels      ♪      ♪

**T**O begin at the beginning is, next to ending at the end, the whole art of writing; as for the middle you may fill it in with any rubble that you choose. But the beginning and the end, like the strong stone outer walls of medieval buildings, contain and define the whole.

And there is more than this: since writing is a human and a living art, the beginning being the motive and the end the object of the work, each inspires it; each runs through organically, and the two between them give life to what you do.

So I will begin at the beginning and I will lay down this first principle, that religion and the full meaning of things has nowhere more disappeared from the modern world than in the department of Guide-Books.

For a Guide-Book will tell you always what are the principle and most vulgar sights of a town; what mountains are most difficult to climb, and, invariably, the exact distances between one place and another. But these things do not serve the End of Man. The end of man is Happiness, and how much happier are you with such a knowledge? Now there are some Guide-Books which do make little excursions now and then into the important things, which tell you (for instance) what kind of cooking you will find in what places, what kind of wine in countries where this beverage is publicly known, and even a few, more daring than the rest, will give a hint or two upon hiring mules, and upon the way that a bargain should be conducted, or how to fight.

But with all this even the best of them do not go to the moral heart of the matter. They do not give you a hint or an idea of that which is surely the basis of all happiness in



travel. I mean, the art of gaining respect in the places where you stay. Unless that respect is paid you, you are more miserable by far than if you had stayed at home, and I would ask anyone who reads this whether he can remember one single journey of his which was not marred by the evident contempt which the servants and the owners of taverns showed for him wherever he went?

It is therefore of the first importance, much more important than any question of price or distance, to know something of this art; it is not difficult to learn, moreover it is so little exploited that if you will but learn it you will have a sense of privilege and of upstanding among your fellows worth all the holidays which were ever taken in the world.

Of this Respect which we seek, out of so many human pleasures, a facile, and a very false, interpretation is that it is the privilege of the rich, and I even know one poor fellow who forged a cheque and went to jail in his desire to impress the host of the 'Spotted Dog', near Barnard Castle. It was an error in him, as it is in all who so imagine. The rich in their degree fall under this contempt as heavily as any, and there is no wealth that can purchase the true awe which it should be your aim to receive from waiters, serving-wenches, boot-blacks, and publicans.

I knew a man once who set out walking from Oxford to Stow-on-the-Wold, from Stow-on-the-Wold to Cheltenham, from Cheltenham to Ledbury, from Ledbury to Hereford, from Hereford to New Rhayader (where the Cobbler lives), and from New Rhayader to the end of the world which lies a little west and north of that place, and all the way he slept rough under hedges and in stacks, or by day in open fields, so terrified was he at the thought of the contempt that awaited him should he pay for a bed. And I knew another man who walked from York to Thirsk, and from Thirsk to Darlington, and from Darlington to Durham, and so on up to the border and over it, and all the way he pretended to be



extremely poor so that he might be certain the contempt he received was due to nothing of his own, but to his clothes only: but this was an indifferent way of escaping, for it got him into many fights with miners, and he was arrested by the police in Lanchester; and at Jedburgh, where his money did really fail him, he had to walk all through the night, finding that no one would take in such a tatterdemalion. The thing could be done much more cheaply than that, and much more respectably, and you can acquire with but little practice one of many ways of achieving the full respect of the whole house, even of that proud woman who sits behind glass in front of an enormous ledger; and the first way is this:

As you come into the place go straight for the smoking-room, and begin talking of the local sport: and do not talk humbly and tentatively as so many do, but in a loud authoritative tone. You shall insist and lay down the law and fly into a passion if you are contradicted. There is here an objection which will arise in the mind of every niggler and boggler who has in the past very properly been covered with ridicule and become the butt of the waiters and stable-yard, which is, that if one is ignorant of the local sport, there is an end of the business. The objection is ridiculous. Do you suppose that the people whom you hear talking around you are more learned than yourself in the matter? And if they are do you suppose that they are acquainted with your ignorance? Remember that most of them have read far less than you, and that you can draw upon an experience of travel of which they can know nothing; do but make the plunge, practising first in the villages of the Midlands, I will warrant you that in a very little while bold assertion of this kind will carry you through any tap-room or bar-parlour in Britain.

I remember once in the holy and secluded village of Washington under the Downs, there came in upon us as we



sat in the inn there a man whom I recognized though he did not know me—for a journalist—incapable of understanding the driving of a cow, let alone horses: a prophet, a socialist, a man who knew the trend of things and so forth: a man who had never been outside a town except upon a motor bicycle, upon which snorting beast indeed had he come to this inn. But if he was less than us in so many things he was greater than us in this art of gaining respect in Inns and Hotels. For he sat down, and when they had barely had time to say good day to him he gave us in minutest detail a great run after a fox, a run that never took place. We were fifteen men in the room; none of us were anything like rich enough to hunt, and the lie went through them like an express. This fellow 'found' (whatever that may mean) at Gumber Corner, ran right through the combe (which, by the way, is one of those bits of land which have been stolen bodily from the English people), cut down the Sutton Road, across the railway at Coates (and there he showed the cloven hoof, for your liar always takes his hounds across the railway), then all over Egdean, and killed in a field near Wisborough. All this he told, and there was not even a man there to ask him whether all those little dogs and horses swam the Rother or jumped it. He was treated like a god; they tried to make him stop but he would not. He was off to Worthing, where I have no doubt he told some further lies upon the growing of tomatoes under glass, which is the main sport of that district. Similarly, I have no doubt, such a man would talk about boats at King's Lynn, murder with violence at Croydon, duck shooting at Ely, and racing anywhere.

Then also if you are in any doubt as to what they want of you, you can always change the scene. Thus fishing is dangerous for even the poor can fish, and the chances are you do not know the names of the animals, and you may be putting salt-water fish into the stream of Lambourne, or talking of salmon upon the Upper Thames. But what is to



prevent you putting on a look of distance and marvel, and conjuring up the North Atlantic for them? Hold them with the cold and the fog of the Newfoundland seas, and terrify their simple minds with whales.

A second way to attain respect, if you are by nature a silent man, and one which I think is always successful is to write before you go to bed and leave upon the table a great number of envelopes which you should address to members of the Cabinet, and Jewish money-lenders, dukes, and in general any of the great. It is but slight labour, and for the contents you cannot do better than put into each envelope one of those advertisements which you will find lying about. Then next morning you should gather them up and ask where the post is: but you need not post them, and you need not fear for your bill. Your bill will stand much the same, and your reputation will swell like a sponge.

And a third way is to go to the telephone, since there are telephones nowadays, and ring up whoever in the neighbourhood is of the greatest importance. There is no law against it, and when you have the number you have but to ask the servant at the other end whether it is not somebody else's house. But in the meanwhile your night in the place is secure.

And a fourth way is to tell them to call you extremely early, and then to get up extremely late. Now why this should have the effect it has I confess I cannot tell. I lay down the rule empirically and from long observation, but I may suggest that perhaps it is the combination of the energy you show in early rising, and of the luxury you show in late rising: for energy and luxury are the two qualities which menials most admire in that governing class to which you flatter yourself you belong. Moreover, the strength of will with which you sweep aside their inconvenience, ordering one thing and doing another, is not without its effect, and the stir you have created is of use to you.

And the fifth way is to be Strong, to Dominate and to Lead. To be one of the Makers of this world, one of the Builders. To have the more Powerful Will. To arouse in all around you by mere Force of Personality a feeling that they must Obey. But I do not know how this is done.





THERE is a certain valley, or rather profound cleft, through the living rock of certain savage mountains through which there roars and tumbles in its narrow trench the Segre, here but a few miles from its rising in the upland grass.

This cleft is so disposed that the smooth limestone slabs of its western wall stand higher than the gloomy steps of cliff upon its eastern, and thus these western cliffs take the glare of the morning sunlight upon them, or the brilliance of the moon when she is full or waning in the first part of her course through the night.

The only path by which men can go down that gorge clings to the eastern face of the abyss and is for ever plunged in shadow. Down this path I went very late upon a summer night, close upon midnight, and the moon just past the full. The air was exceedingly clear even for that high place, and the moon struck upon the limestone of the sheer opposing cliffs in a manner neither natural nor pleasing, but suggesting horror, and, as it were, something absolute, too simple for mankind.

It was not cold, but there were no crickets at such a level in the mountains, nor any vegetation there except a brush here and there clinging between the rocks and finding a doughty rooting in their fissures. Though the map did not include this gorge, I could guess that it would be impossible for me, save by following that dreadful path all night, to find a village, and therefore I peered about in the dense shadow as I went for one of those overhanging rocks which are so common in that region, and soon I found one. It was a refuge better than most that I had known during a lonely travel of three days, for the whole bank was hollowed in,



and there was a distinct, if shallow, cave bordering the path. Into this, therefore, I went and laid down, wrapping myself round in a blanket I had brought from the plains beyond the mountains, and, with my loaf and haversack and a wine-skin that I carried for a pillow, I was very soon asleep.

When I woke, which I did with suddenness, it seemed to me to have turned uncommonly cold, and when I stepped out from my blanket (for I was broad awake) the cold struck me still more nearly, and was not natural in such a place. But I knew how a mist will gather suddenly upon these hills, and I went out and stood upon the path to see what weather the hour had brought me. The sky, the narrow strip of sky above the gorge, was filled with scud flying so low that now and then bulges or trails of it would strike against that western cliff of limestone and wreath down it, and lift and disappear, but fast as the scud was moving there was no noise of wind. I seemed not to have slept long, for the moon was still riding in heaven, though her light now came in rapid waxing and waning between the shreds of the clouds. Beneath me a little angrier than before (so that I thought to myself, 'Up in the hills it has been raining') roared the Segre.

As I stood thus irresolute and quite awakened from sleep, I saw to my right the figure of a little man who beckoned. No fear took me as I saw him, but a good deal of wonder, for he was oddly shaped, and in the darkness of that pathway I could not see his face. But in his presence by some accident of the mind many things changed their significance: the gorge became personal to me, the river a voice, the fitful moonlight a warning, and it seemed as though some safety was to be sought, or some certitude, upwards, whence I had come, and I felt oddly as though the little figure were a guide.

He was so short as I watched him that I thought him



almost a dwarf, though I have seen men as small guiding the mules over the breaches in the ridge of the hills. He was hunchback, or the great pack he was carrying made him seem so. His thin legs were long for his body, and he walked too rapidly, with bent knees; his right hand he leant upon a great sapling; upon his head was a very wide hat, the stuff of which I could not see in the darkness. Now and again he would turn and beckon me, and he always went on a little way before. As for me, partly because he beckoned, but more because I felt prescient of a goal, I followed him.

No mountain path seems the same when you go up it and when you go down it. This it was which rendered unfamiliar to me the shapes of the rocks and the turnings of the gorge as I hurried behind my companion. With every passing moment, moreover, the light grew less secure, the scud thickened, and as we rose towards the lower level of those clouds the mass of them grew more even, until at last the path and some few yards of the emptiness which sank away to our left was all one could discern. The mist was full of a diffused moonlight, but it was dense. I wondered when we should strike out of the gorge and begin to find the upland grasses that lead towards the highest summits of those hills, for thither I was sure were we bound.

Soon I began to recognize that easier trend in the rock wall, those increasing and flattened gullies which mark the higher slope. Here and there an unmelted patch of snow appeared, grass could be seen, and at last we were upon the roll of the high land where it runs up steeply to the ridge of the chain. Moss and the sponging of moisture in the turf were beneath our feet, the path disappeared, and our climb got steeper and steeper; and still the little man went on before, pressing eagerly and breasting the hill. I neither felt fatigue nor noticed that I did not feel it. The extreme angle of the slope suited my mood, nor was I conscious of its danger, though its fantastic steepness exhilarated me because



it was so novel to be trying such things at night in such a weather. The moon, I think, must by this time have been near its sinking, for the mist grew full of darkness round about us, and at last it was altogether deep night. I could see my companion only as a blur of difference in the darkness, but even as this change came I felt the steepness relax beneath my climbing feet, the round level of the ridge was come, and soon again we were hurrying across it until there came, in a hundred yards or so, a moment in which my companion halted, as men who know the mountains halt when they reach an edge below which they know the land to break away.

He was waiting, and I waited with him: we had not long so to stand.

The mist which so often lifts as one passes the crest of the hills lifted for us also and, below, it was broad day.

Ten thousand feet below, at the foot of forest cascading into forest, stretched out into an endless day, was the Weald. There were the places I had always known, but not as I had known them: they were in another air. There was the ridge, and the river valley far off to the eastward, and Parham Pines, Amberley wild brooks, and Petworth the little town, and I saw the Rough clearly, and the hills out beyond the county, and beyond them farther plains, and all the fields and all the houses of the men I knew. Only it was much larger, and it was more intimate, and it was farther away, and it was certainly divine.

A broad road such as we have not here and such as they have not in those hills, a road for armies, sank back and forth in great gradients down to the plain. These and the forests were foreign; the Weald below, so many thousand feet below, was not foreign but transformed. The dwarf went down that road. I did not follow him. I saw him clearly now. His curious little coat of mountain stuff, his thin, bent legs walking rapidly, and the chestnut sapling by



which he walked, holding it in his hand by the middle. I could see the brown colour of it, and the shininess of the bark of it, and the ovals of white where the branchlings had been cut away. So I watched him as he went down and down the road. He never once looked back and he no longer beckoned me.

In a moment, before a word could form in the mind, the mist had closed again and it was mortally cold; and with that cold there came to me an appalling knowledge that I was alone upon such a height and knew nothing of my way. The hand which I put to my shoulder where my blanket was found it wringing wet. The mist got greyer, my mind more confused as I struggled to remember, and then I woke and found I was still in the cave. All that business had been a dream, but so vivid that I carried it all through the day, and carry it still.

It was the very early morning; the gorge was full of mist, the Segre made a muffled roaring through such a bank of cloud; the damp of the mist was on everything. The stones in the pathway glistened, the air was raw and fresh, awaiting the rising of the sun. I took the path and went downward.

## On the Melting of the Ice      ~      ~      ~      ~

I WISH I had been there when the ice melted; in the days when the great river valleys were formed, when the rich meadows were laid down from the mud of the flooded rivers, and when the gravels were rolled along, forming beaches one below the other as the waters subsided, when Northern Europe was carved.

Men were there and saw it. Some say it was so little a while ago that the great monarchies of the hot places, Egypt and Assyria, were in their splendour, and there is something to be said for that saying.

It was an Englishman, spontaneous, individual, but at the same time exact, who started that hare. And the hare may be more than a phantasm. When you read the arguments it looks as though he were right. And if he were right, what an explanation of history! . . . The Ice Melting but 5 or 6,000 years ago.

Then indeed could we explain how it is that the North was unheard of during all these early centuries, and how it was that an increasing field increasingly breeding men, expanded towards the North, and how it is that you have no records of the North before the first movements of tribes 3,000 years ago, and their greater movement 2,000 years ago, and then at last the very late story of the brief Scandinavian adventure with its marvellous epics. And it would explain also the very small numbers of the North and the way in which the North got its language so largely from the South—for what we call the 'Teutonic languages' to-day (of which we have no appreciable record till about Charlemagne's time), turn out to be for half their matter at least (and research will increase the proportion) built up of words from the Mediterranean. [Read Wiener, his



revolutionary book and the collapse of the 'Early Gothic' fraud.]

But apart from what it would explain in history, what a vision it must have been whenever it took place! For the melting of the ice was very rapid. The geologists do not always use their eyes. Look at those great scoops in the chalk hills shorn out by the water as it swung from left to right through the valleys, and see those enormous floods racing down.

See how those huge stones were rolled along which form the gravels of the higher levels, and ask yourselves in what a current they drove! Or wonder at the great sawings through the rock which unite and drain the old lakes of the Pyrenees! That was a sight to see! It is just possible that someone recorded it. Some traveller thrust up northward by exile or by avarice may have come with his slaves and his retinue to the edges of the enormous thing. He may have seen the Rhone tumbling like a sea released through the gap of the Jura. Or he may have seen the white seething at the mouths of the river which laid down the Camargue.

We see no such things nowadays.

Imagine yourself in a galley bowling westward under the Levanter compelled to go farther north than you had wished: the wind dropping. Then your hanging about all night off the coast of what is now the Stes. Maries, and then at morning hearing with fright, but with wonder, on your starboard beam to the North, the enormous noise of waters, and seeing the flecks of foam go by you, and catching on the horizon a sort of low tumble or cataract or flood reaching the sea over twenty miles of beach and carrying with it half a county of stones from the hills. There the stones are to this day—a vast plain of sterile pebbles from a fist to a pea. The ancients said that Hercules once passed that way.

Or think what it must have been to stand on the Ventoux and see the melting of the ice from Auvergne. Or to stand



driven upward on to the hills of the Artois, and to see the waters rising in the Dover strait below.

For the thing went very quickly, make no doubt of that.

There is a superstition for the moment in favour of slow, very slow, changes in the affairs of this earth. I think that superstition has arisen from a muddle-headed hope that slow work can exclude a Creator and Will. At any rate there is no proof for it. Some of the processes have been very slow (they are exceedingly slow to-day), but some jerks have been rapid enough: revolutionary: catastrophic: and the last melting of the ice was of these.

And what do you suppose happened in the splendid valleys of Norway? To-day they are drowned. What recession of the ice filled them more full? How did man come to occupy the land released? During what intermission of time, during what generations (few and creative) did the tall fair race, for a moment wanderers, build their little simple structure of a religion which we know so little (because what we have of it is wholly intermixed with the Roman) and of a language which we know still less (for that also is mixed with the South), but at any rate of a special culture common to but a few thousands of men. How came these Scandinavians to copy Roman ships? It all came after the melting of the ice.

Then I ask myself what men saw, and what they felt as they saw, the waterfalls. For those marked all Europe also. Glaciers we know to-day. We have but to imagine them expanded, and the landscape is the same. Stand on the Maladetta and conceive the field of ice holding not only the shoulder of the mountain but all the valley below and out to the plain of France, and you only have the replica of what a man may see from Mont Blanc. Or stand on an Alpine peak and imagine the sheets of ice and snow below you, spread, covering every rock for as far as the eye can reach, and you only have a repetition of what men still see in



Greenland. But we have no modern parallel (save in perhaps half a dozen places on the whole earth) by which to reconstruct the enormity of the waterfalls of those days.

For there were not only these swirling waters carving out the great valleys, there was the thundering of water down over the ledges, thousand upon thousand. Perhaps they helped to scoop out the smaller lakes more than did the ice before them. There must have been some such sight above Grenoble when the great lake which burst seven hundred years ago was forming. For in the beginning that lake basin in which Bourg d'Oisans now stands must have been a mass of ice, and then as the ice melted and as the glacier above it melted all the way up to La Grave, up to the very shoulders of the Pelvoux, what mighty armies of water must have roared down to the trench of the Isere! And wherever there is to-day a gorge (or, at least, in the most of these cuttings) you must have had the same sight. Their little dwindling descendants now and then show a trickle of water for our amusement and we are still astonished. But the grandfathers of these were giants!

They say also that the sea rose. It may have done so. Perhaps it must have done so. And if it did so what a sight must that also not have been: the cutting of the straits.

I have read of but one part of the world in which a tradition remains of such a change, and in that case it may have been an earthquake rather than a rising of the waters: I mean the Straits of Messina. Of the water flooding in here there is a legend; but there is none remaining of the cutting of the chalk between Kent and the Artois; or of the flooding, if it were flooded, of the channel between the Pillars of Hercules; or of the slower lap which gradually just covered the entrances of the Baltic—a freshwater lake.

And, by the way, what made that most amazing issue whereby the Black Sea feeds the Eastern Mediterranean with a continuous stream? I have read so many guesses, and they

have not satisfied me. It is so long, so narrow, so artificial, and double at that. Very changed would the history of the world have been—of the modern world—if Nature had played some freak of the same sort to join the central Atlantic and the central Pacific Seas, or if the low sand between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean had not run dry, or if by some shock the Mediterranean had poured into the Jordan valley.

There is much else in the melting of the ice. Was it then that Northern Africa dried up? Was it then that the old watercourses which are now desert and in which you can still find proof of the habitations of men, and the stranded beasts and fishes of old rivers, were in full spate?

Who lived there? What did they in the story of mankind? And did Egypt when it was already able to build and to carve men out of stone, look out from the head of the Delta upon a shallow sea?

I think the greater part of the story of the world's landscape has been lost to us for ever.



## On the Last Infirmary      ∪      ∪      ∪      ∪      ∪

IF you were to seek for the most irrational of all appetites, the one appetite for which you could not give any sort of reason, you would find it to be the strongest appetite of all: the appetite for posthumous fame.

Milton made a little fortune (in the literary sense of that word—and my fellow-hacks will know what sort of fortune *that* is) by calling it the last infirmity of noble minds. It is a very true saying, not only in its direct sense but in its implication. It is not only true that men who have conquered every other appetite hardly conquer this one; it is also true that there is something divine about the desire for fame, infirmity though it be. The mind remains well noble though still fully possessed of such a desire.

But explain the love of fame you cannot. It would be explicable if there were implanted in the mind of man everywhere and at all times a certitude, as strong as our certitude of the universe about us, that the individual soul survived death with a full, conscious, and continuous memory, *and*, on the top of that, would be more interested in what was going on here than in what was going on in its own place. No such certitude has been granted to man. On the contrary, those who hold the doctrine of immortality hold it as a special revelation and defend it perilously. The mass of men have been very vague or sceptical or negative about the whole affair. And as to the second part of the proposition, the idea that, even granted this personal, conscious, and continuous survival, the soul would be more interested in things happening here on earth than in the things of its own place, no one has ever dreamt or could dream of saying anything so absurd. The farthest to which St. Augustine went (and he went as far as anybody) was to say that the



soul, however blessed, retained the great human affections: men hope that this is true, though it is hardly doctrine. But neither St. Augustine nor anyone else (that I know of) ever pretended that the damned or beatified soul was worrying about what Smith, Jones, and Robinson thought about some verse it had produced, or was chagrined by their neglect—after it had got rid of the limitations of this world. Why, one does not even bother at fifty about what people may be saying of one's work at twenty-five. Most of us would rather it were forgotten, and some of us actually suppress it at great expense: buying up the first edition and leaving strict injunctions in our wills that any immature stuff shall not be printed after our death.

If this is our attitude towards a little development in the little space of half a little mortal life, what do you suppose old Homer cares, or the ever young Theocritus?

I say 'young Theocritus'. The adjective gives me pause. How old was he when he died? His verse was young . . . yes! . . . but I have, at the moment of writing, no knowledge at all of the date when that remarkable *littérateur* gave up his trade. Bear with me a moment while I look it up in a book of reference.

I find in my book of reference that he was born about 300 B.C., and that 'he lived for a long time' at the Court of Alexandria. But my book does not tell me how long that 'long time' was. Which reminds me of the parish priest of whom the story goes that he preached his sermon from this text: 'Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years and *he* died.' He first quoted the text, then made a solemn pause, then added: 'I have nothing more to say,' and left the pulpit—a model to the rest of his order.

Anyhow Theocritus is dead, and he wrote in a very young fashion. But he would be a bold man who should say that Theocritus is caring now either for what I am writing about



him here, or even for that magnificent sentence which Andrew Lang constructed in praise of him when he spoke of the 'many-coloured flame of Theocritus'.

No. The thing is inexplicable. On the other hand, it is extremely useful, as are hunger and thirst and several other little things of the same sort. It is useful to the end of the works of man. If it were not so, what works would man perform at all?

There was a school which had half a dozen adherents in London, and two or three in Paris, genuinely attached to it (and many thousands repeating its formulae insincerely), and this school said that the artist worked for his own sake or for the sake of art. Heaven knows their productions might have persuaded us even of that impossible theory. They were so bad; so very bad. But the artist, as we all know, does not work for the sake of art, still less for some secret pleasure of his own. He has that pleasure in working. He admires the chance which guides his hand. But his driving motive is fame. It is the driving motive, also, of all the failures—that is, of the great mass of men. And you have this ridiculous paradox about it, that immediate fame is everywhere suspected. Men everywhere have the uneasy sensation that if they are too much praised before death, they will hardly be sufficiently praised afterwards. And it is the longer praise afterwards that they seek. Endurance between the lips of men: The monument of the mind. That is, a fame of which they will know nothing, or for which, even if they know of it, they will hardly care. The poet says (at it again!):

But in that part of Heaven where silent stand  
The still remembering spirits, hearken down,  
And warm again with home to hear the land,  
To hear the land alive with your renown.  
Nor peace nor strength nor laughter could I give  
But these great wages: after death to live.



Not a bit of it. Even if he pulled it off, the poet, he only added a little incense to a great cloud of glory and only a little note to an enormous chorus. He only added a human thing to blessedness beyond the scale of mortality; like a child who offers a little toy as a present to his elders.

But there the appetite is—a spur to man and an excellent food for irony.

The best thing, perhaps, in that book full of good things called *Seven Men*, which Mr. Max Beerbohm wrote, is the picture of the poet who has sold his soul to the devil for a chance of looking up, in the British Museum, references to his work made a hundred years after his death. He finds one only reference (you will remember), and that in the shape of a casual allusion made, not in connexion with his own work at all, but with another man's work—and in phonetic spelling to boot!

Ronsard brutally faced the problem and got out of it by a lie, or rather by a quirk. He asked the Muses of what profit it was that he should serve them, seeing that the Great Dead took no pleasure in their fame. To which the Muses answered him that the soul is immortal—but that is no reply. The Muses having answered thus, Ronsard goes on to say that people who are devout and religious will always write good verse.

What! Is every one that humbly does his duty and serves his God to be accounted a writer of good verse?

Or again, is no good verse to be good verse because it was written by a bad man? Why, here am I who have just been quoting Milton, a man rotten with the two worst vices: falsehood and pride, but a Poet; and for that matter, I can hardly remember one thoroughly good man who did write good verse, unless it be the author of the *Pange Lingua*.

I beg that the poets who read this may seek no quarrel with me. I am not saying that their lives are bad: I am only



saying that their verse is bad. And, however bad their verse, you may lay to it that they will go on writing it, in the vain pursuit of posthumous fame. Wherein they resemble those little dogs, so numerous and so diverse, which, in the year of gold (to be accurate, in the autumn of 1892) many others and I led out to Cumnor Hill, and thence sent them following in a flash after the scent of an aniseed bag till they killed nothing on the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford. They ran very hard, but they ran after nothing: and so it is with the poets, and fame is but a savour and an air.

## The Absence of the Past



IT is perhaps not possible to put into human language that emotion which rises when a man stands upon some plot of European soil and can say with certitude to himself: 'Such-and-such great, or wonderful, or beautiful things happened here.'

Touch that emotion ever so lightly and it tumbles into the commonplace, and the deadest of commonplace. Neglect it ever so little and the Present (which is never really there, for even as you walk across Trafalgar Square it is yesterday and to-morrow that are in your mind), the Present, I say, or rather the immediate flow of things, occupies you altogether. But there is a mood, and it is a mood common in men who have read and who have travelled, in which one is overwhelmed by the sanctity of a place on which men have done this or that a long, long time ago.

Here it is that the gentle supports which have been framed for human life by that power which launched it come in and help a man. Time does not remain, but space does, and though we cannot seize the Past physically we can stand physically upon the site, and we can have (if I may so express myself) a physical communion with the Past by occupying that very spot which the past greatness of man or of event has occupied.

It was but the other day that, with an American friend at my side, I stood looking at the little brass plate which says that here Charles Stuart faced (he not only faced, but he refused) the authority of his judges. I know not by what delicate mechanism of the soul that record may seem at one moment a sort of tourist thing, to be neglected or despised, and at another moment a portent. But I will confess that all of a sudden, pointing out this very well-known record upon



the brass let into the stone in Westminster Hall, I suddenly felt the presence of the thing. Here all that business was done: they were alive; they were in the Present as we are. Here sat that tender-faced, courageous man, with his pointed beard and his luminous eyes; here he was a living man holding his walking-stick with the great jewel in the handle of it; here was spoken in the very tones of his voice (and how a human voice perishes!—how we forget the accents of the most loved and the most familiar voices within a few days of their disappearance!); here the small gestures, and all the things that make up a personality, marked out Charles Stuart. When the soul is seized with such sudden and positive conviction of the substantial past it is overwhelmed; and Europe is full of such ghosts.

As you take the road to Paradise, about half-way there you come to an inn, which even as inns go is admirable. You go into the garden of it, and see the great trees and the wall of Box Hill shrouding you all around. It is beautiful enough (in all conscience) to arrest one without the need of history or any admixture of the pride of race; but as you sit there on a seat in that garden you are sitting where Nelson sat when he said good-bye to his Emma, and if you will move a yard or two you will be sitting where Keats sat biting his pen and thinking out some new line of his poem.

What has happened? These two men with their keen, feminine faces, these two great heroes of a great time in the great story of a great people of this world, are not there. They are nowhere. But the site remains.

Philosophers can put in formulae the crowd of suggestions that rush into the mind when one's soul contemplates the perpetual march and passage of mortality. But they can do no more than give us formularies: they cannot give us replies. What are we? What is all this business? Why does the mere space remain and all the rest dissolve?

There is a lonely place in the woods of Chilham, in the



county of Kent, above the River Stour, where a man comes upon an irregular earthwork still plainly marked upon the brow of the bluff. Nobody comes near this place. A vague country lane, or rather track, goes past the wet soil of it, plunges into the valley beyond, and after serving a windmill joins the high road to Canterbury. Well, that vague track is the ancient British road, as old as anything in this Island, that took men from Winchester to the Straits of Dover. That earthwork is the earthwork (I could prove it, but this is not the place) where the British stood against the charge of the Tenth Legion, and first heard, sounding on their bronze, the arms of Caesar. Here the river was forded; here the little men of the South went up in formation; here the Barbarian broke and took his way, as the opposing General has recorded, through devious woodland paths, scattering in the pursuit; here began the great history of England.

Is it not an enormous business merely to stand in such a place? I think so.

I know a field to the left of the Chalons Road, some few miles before you get to Ste Menehould. There used to be an inn by the roadside called 'The Sign of the Moon'. It has disappeared. There used to be a ramshackle windmill beyond the field, a mile or so from the road, on an upland swell of land, but that also has gone, and had been gone for some time before I knew the field of which I write. It is a bare fold of land with one or two little scrubby spinneys alongside the plough. And for the rest, just the brown earth and the sky. There are days on which you will see a man at work somewhere within that mile, others on which it is completely deserted. Here it is that the French Revolution was preserved. Here was the Prussian charge. On the deserted, ugly lump of empty earth beyond you were the three batteries that checked the invaders. It was all alive and crowded for one intense moment with the fate of Christendom. Here, on the place in which you are standing



and gazing, young Goethe stood and gazed. That meaningless stretch of coarse grass supported Brunswick and the King of Prussia, and the brothers of the King of France, as they stood windswept in the rain, watching the failure of the charge. It is the field of Valmy. Turn on that height and look back westward and you see the plains rolling out infinitely; they are the plains upon which Attila was crushed; but there is no one there.

All men have remarked that night and silence are august, and I think that if this quality in night and silence be closely examined it will be found to consist, in part at least, in this: that either of them symbolizes Absence. By a paradox which I will not attempt to explain, but which all have felt, it is in silence and in darkness that the Past most vividly returns, and that this absence of what once was possesses, nay, obtrudes itself upon the mind: it becomes almost a sensible thing. There is much to be said for those who pretend, imagine, or perhaps have experienced under such conditions the return of the dead. The mood of darkness and of silence is a mood crammed with something that does not remain, as space remains, that is limited by time, and is a creature of time, and yet something that has an immortal right to remain.

Now, I suppose that in that sentence where I say things mortal have immortal rights to permanence, the core of the whole business is touched upon. And I suppose that the great men who could really think and did not merely fire off fireworks to dazzle their contemporaries—I suppose that Descartes, for instance, if he were here sitting at my table—could help me to solve that contradiction; but I sit and think and cannot solve it.

‘What,’ says the man upon his own land, inherited perhaps and certainly intended for his posterity—‘what! Can you separate me from this? Are not this and I bound up inextricably?’ The answer is ‘No; you are not so far as any observer



of this world can discover. Space is in no way possessed by man, and he who may render a site immortal in one of our various ways, the captain who there conquered, the poet who there established his sequence of words, cannot himself put forward a claim to permanence within it at all.'

There was a woman of charming vivacity, whose eyes were ever ready for laughter, and whose tone of address of itself provoked the noblest of replies. Many loved her; all admired. She passed (I will suppose) by this street or by that; she sat at table in such-and-such a house; Gainsborough painted her; and all that time ago there were men who had the luck to meet her and to answer her laughter with their own. And the house where she moved is there and the street in which she walked, and the very furniture she used and touched with her hands you may touch with your hands. You shall come into the rooms that she inhabited, and there you shall see her portrait, all light and movement and grace and beatitude.

She is gone altogether, the voice will never return, the gestures will never be seen again. She was under a law; she changed, she suffered, she grew old, she died; and there was her place left empty. The not living things remain; but what counted, what gave rise to them, what made them all that they are, has pitifully disappeared, and the greater, the infinitely greater, thing was subject to a doom perpetually of change and at last of vanishing. The dead surroundings are not subject to such a doom. Why?

All those boys who held the line of the low ridge or rather swell of land from Hougoumont through the Belle Alliance have utterly gone. More than dust goes, more than wind goes; they will never be seen again. Their voices will never be heard—they are not. But what is the mere soil of the field without them? What meaning has it save for their presence?

I could wish to understand these things.



## On the Approach of an Awful Doom      ∞      ∞

**M**Y dear little Anglo-Saxons, Celt-Iberians, and Teutonico-Latin oddities—the time has come to convey, impart, and make known to you the dreadful conclusions and horrible prognostications that flow, happen, deduce, derive, and are drawn from the truly abominable conditions of the social medium in which you and I and all poor devils are most fatally and surely bound to draw out our miserable existence.

Note, I say ‘existence’ and not ‘existences’. Why do I say ‘existence’, and not ‘existences’? Why, with a fine handsome plural ready to hand, do I wind you up and turn you off, so to speak, with a piffling little singular not fit for a half-starved newspaper fellow, let alone a fine, fully fledged, intellectual and well-read vegetarian and teetotaler who writes in the reviews? Eh? Why do I say ‘existence’?—speaking of many, several, and various persons as though they had but one mystic, combined, and corporate personality such as Rousseau (a fig for the Genevese!) portrayed in his *Contrat Social* (which you have never read), and such as Hobbes, in his *Leviathan* (which some of you have heard of), ought to have premised but did not, having the mind of a lame, halting, and ill-furnished clockmaker, and a blight on him!

Why now ‘existence’ and not ‘existences’? You may wonder; you may ask yourselves one to another mutually round the tea-table putting it as a problem or riddle. You may make a game of it, or use it for gambling, or say it suddenly as a catch for your acquaintances when they come up from the suburbs. It is a very pretty question and would have been excellently debated by Thomas Aquinas in the Jacobins of St. Jacques, near the Parloir aux Bourgeois, by



the gate of the University; by Albertus Magnus in the Cordeliers, hard by the College of Bourgoyne; by Pic de la Mirandole, who lived I care not a rap where and debated I know not from Adam how or when; by Lord Bacon, who took more bribes in a day than you and I could compass in a dozen years; by Spinoza, a good worker of glass lenses, but a philosopher whom I have never read nor will; by Coleridge when he was not talking about himself nor taking some filthy drug; by John Pilkington Smith, of Norwood, Drysalter, who has, I hear, been lately horribly bitten by the metaphysic; and by a crowd of others.

But that's all by the way. Let them debate that will, for it leads nowhere unless indeed there be sharp revelation, positive declaration, and very certain affirmation to go upon by way of Basis or First Principle whence to deduce some sure conclusion and irrefragable truth; for thus the intellect walks, as it were, along a high road, whereas by all other ways it is lurching and stumbling and boggling and tumbling in I know not what mists and brambles of the great bare, murky twilight and marshy hill-side of philosophy, where I also wandered when I was a fool and unoccupied and lacking exercise for the mind, but from whence, by the grace of St. Anthony of Miranella and other patrons of mine, I have very happily extricated myself. And here I am in the parlour of the 'Bugle' at Yarmouth, by a Christian fire, having but lately come off the sea and writing this for the edification and confirmation of honest souls.

What, then, of the question, *Quid de querendo? Quantum? Qualiter? Ubi? Cur? Quid? Quando? Quomodo? Quum? Sive an non?*

Ah! There you have it. For note you, all these interrogative categories must be met, faced, resolved, and answered exactly—or you have no more knowledge of the matter than *The Times* has of economics or the King of the Belgians of thorough-Bass. Yea, if you miss, overlook,



neglect, or shirk by reason of fatigue or indolence, so much as one tittle of these several aspects of a question you might as well leave it altogether alone and give up analysis for selling stock, as did the Professor of Verbalism in the University of Adelaide to the vast solace and enrichment of his family.

For by the neglect of but one of these final and fundamental approaches to the full knowledge of a question the world has been irreparably, irretrievably, and permanently robbed of the certain reply to, and left ever in the most disastrous doubt upon, this most important and necessary matter—namely, *whether real existence can be predicated of matter*.

For Anaxagoras of Syracuse, that was tutor to the Tyrant Machion, being in search upon this question for a matter of seventy-two years, four months, three days, and a few odd hours and minutes, did, in extreme old age, as he was walking by the shore of the sea, hit, as it were in a flash, upon six of the seven answers, and was able in one moment, after so much delay and vexatious argument for and against with himself, to resolve the problem upon the points of *how, why, when, where, how much, and in what*, matter might or might not be real, and was upon the very nick of settling the last little point—namely, *sive an non* (that is, whether it *were* real or no)—when, as luck would have it, or rather, as his own beastly appetite and senile greed would have it, he broke off sharp at hearing the dinner-gong or bell, or horn, or whatever it was—for upon these matters the King was indifferent (*de minimis non curat rex*), and so am I—and was poisoned even as he sat at table by the agents of Pyrrhus.

By this accident, by this mere failure upon *one* of the Seven Answers, it has been since that day never properly decided whether or no this true existence was or was not predicable of matter; and some believing matter to be there have treated it pompously and given it reverence and adored it



in a thousand merry ways, but others being confident it was not there have starved and fallen off edges and banged their heads against corners and come plump against high walls; nor can either party convince the other, nor can the doubts of either be laid to rest, nor shall it from now to the Day of Doom be established whether there is a Matter or is none; though many learned men have given up their lives to it, including Professor Britton, who so despaired of an issue that he drowned himself in the Cam only last Wednesday. But what care I for him or any other Don?

So there we are and an answer must be found, but upon my soul I forget to what it hangs, though I know well there was some question propounded at the beginning of this for which I cared a trifle at the time of asking it and you I hope not at all. Let it go the way of all questions, I beg of you, for I am very little inclined to seek and hunt through all the heap that I have been tearing through this last hour with Pegasus curvetting and prancing and flapping his wings to the danger of my seat and of the cities and fields below me.

Come, come, there's enough for one bout, and too much for some. No good ever came of argument and dialectic, for these breed only angry gestures and gusty disputes (*de gustibus non disputandum*) and the ruin of friendships and the very fruitful pullulation of Dictionaries, text-books, and wicked men, not to speak of Intellectuals, Newspapers, Libraries, Debating-clubs, bankruptcies, madness, *Petitiones elenchi*, and ills innumerable.

I say live and let live; and now I think of it there was something at the beginning and title of this that dealt with a warning to ward you off a danger of some kind that terrified me not a little when I sat down to write, and that was, if I remember right, that a friend had told me how he had read in a book that the damnable Brute CAPITAL was about to swallow us all up and make slaves of us and that there was no way out of it, seeing that it was fixed, settled,



and grounded in economics, not to speak of the procession of the Equinox, the Horoscope of Trimegistus, and *Old Moore's Almanack*. Oh! Run, Run! The Rich are upon us! Help! Their hot breath is on our necks! What jaws! What jaws!

Well, what must be must be, and what will be will be, and if the Rich are upon us with great open jaws and having power to enslave all by the very fatal process of unalterable laws and at the bidding of Blind Fate as she is expounded by her prophets who live on milk and newspapers and do woundily talk Jew Socialism all day long; yet is it proved by the same intellectual certitude and irrefragable method that we shall not be caught before the year 1938 at the earliest and with luck we may run ten years more: why then let us make the best of the time we have, and sail, ride, travel, write, drink, sing, and all be friends together; and do you go about doing good to the utmost of your power, as I heartily hope you will, though from your faces I doubt it hugely. A blessing I wish you all.

## The Spaniard



WHEN I was in the French Army I met many men who had a constant tradition of the military past. These were not in the regiment, but one came across them in the garrison town where we were quartered, and among others there was an old man whose father had fought in the Peninsula and who retained a very vivid family memory of those wars. From this old man I gathered in particular what I had learned in general from reading, an impression of the Spaniard as a soldier, but that impression was false. It was false for many reasons, but chiefly for this: that Spain, like the United Kingdom, is very highly differentiated indeed, and province differs from province to an extent hardly ever grasped by those who have never visited the country.

When, many years later, I had the opportunity to visit Spain, this was the first point I noticed. It is particularly striking in the mountains. You will find yourself with one type of man talking Catalan in some small modern village; the way in which he tills his garden, the way in which his house is built, and the way in which he bargains with you, are all native to his race. You set off over the hills and by evening you come to another village more different than is a Welsh village from an English one, for you have crossed from Catalonia into Aragon. Then, again, the boundary of the Basque Provinces, or at least of the Basque race, is as clean as a cut with a knife. One may argue indefinitely whether this is because the Basques have preferred the peculiar climate and soil of their inhabitation or whether it is their energy and tenacity which have changed the earth, but there it is. The Basque is much more separate from the people around him than is even (if he will pardon my saying



so) the Irishman of the West from the Scotchman of the Lothians.

There is another form of differentiation in Spain which is so striking that I hesitate for adjectives to describe it lest those adjectives should seem excessive; but I will say this, it is more striking than the contrast between the oasis and the desert in Africa, and that is pretty strong. I mean the differentiation produced by the sudden change from the high plateaux to the sea-plains. The word 'sea-plains' is not strictly accurate, the belt running back from the Mediterranean sometimes looks like a plain, sometimes like an enclosed valley, more often it is a system of terraces, hills upon hills, but at any rate when you are once out of the influence of the sea and on to the high plateaux which form, as it were, the body of the Spanish square, you pass from luxuriance to sterility, from ease to hardship, and from the man who is always willing to smile to the stoic.

Then, again, you have the contrast between Andalusia and everything to the north of Andalusia. Andalusia was the very wealthy part of Spain under the Romans. It must always remain the very wealthy part of Spain so far as agriculture is concerned. It has easy communications and a climate like nothing on earth. Therefore, when the Moors came there they found a large, active, and instructed Christian population, and they ruined Andalusia less than any other part of Spain. Nay, in some odd (and not very pleasant) way they married the Asiatic to the European, and the European solidity, the European power over stone, the European sense of a straight line, were in Andalusia used by the vague imagination of the Asiatic to his own purpose, with marvellous results. All this has produced a quite distinct type of man; and it is remarkable that, as is to be found in so many similar cases in Europe, the people exactly limitrophous to Andalusia on the north are peculiarly sparse,



impoverished and alone. There lies the wide and arid sweep of La Mancha, imperishable in European letters.

Now, having said so much as to this high differentiation of the Spanish people (and one could add much more: the Asturias, always unconquered; the Atlantic tides and rivers, the tideless Eastern harbours, the curious poverty of Estremadura; the French experiments of Madrid and its neighbourhood, so utterly ill-fitted to the climate and the genius of Spain), let me say something of the Spanish unity.

No nation in Europe is so united. By which I do not mean that no other nation is so homogeneous, even in those deep things which escape superficial differentiation. The Spaniard is united to the Spaniard by the three most powerful bonds that can bind man to man—religion, historical memory, isolation. It is not to be admitted by any careful traveller that the religious emotion of the modern Spaniard is either combative or profound. Indeed, I know of nothing more remarkable than the passage from Spanish to French thought in this respect. You leave, let us say, Huesca; you notice at the morning Mass a moving and somewhat small concourse of worshippers, few communicants, but above all in the temper of the place, in the written stuff of the somewhat belated newspapers, a sort of indifference; as though the things of the soul 'muddled through'. You bicycle a long day to Canfranc, the next day you are over the hills (and Lord! what hills), and there you are in the seething vat of the great French quarrel. From the little villages right up to the majestic capital, Toulouse, you feel the pulsation increasing. Religion and its enemies are there at war. The thing is vital, and men are quite ready to die on either side. Of this, I say, you find little or nothing in Spain; nevertheless, religion does bind the Spaniard to the Spaniard, and it binds him firmly to his kind. For the very fact that there is so little opposition, while it produces so much indifference, produces also a singular national contempt; and every man



speaking to every other man knows with precision how that man's mind stands upon the ultimate things, how careless he is and yet how secure.

Again, the Spaniards are united by that profound historical memory which is a necessity to all nations and a peculiar asset in those who retain it alive. We in this country feel the appetite for an historical memory; we attempt to satisfy that appetite by the creation of legends; we call ourselves 'Anglo-Saxons'—there is even, I believe, a notable body which will have us descended from the ten Lost Tribes. The French satisfy that appetite by recurrent experiences: the reign of the Grand Monarque, the Revolution, 1870. Glorious or tragic, each national experience gives a new impetus to the historic memory of the French people. Not so the Spaniard. All Spain is bound together by the enormous recollection of the *Reconquista*. Here is a province in which the Faith and the Roman Order were not recovered by persuasion (as was the case with Britain) nor were utterly lost (as was the case with Africa for so long) but were got back mile by mile as the prize of hard fighting. That fighting was, so to speak, the very trade of the Spaniards, from the time when Charlemagne was a little boy to the time when Henry VIII was a little boy. All the story of our European growth, the time when we were made, the time which is to the French the accomplishment of their unity, to the English the foundation of their institutions, to the Italians the development of their art, that to the Spaniard is the story of the *Reconquista*. And the Middle Ages, which have impressed themselves upon every European nation as the glorious transition of youth impresses itself upon the sad memory of a man, stand to the Spaniard for the *Reconquista*. This has nothing to do with his knowledge of names or with what is called 'Education'. It is in the blood. The best proof of its result is this, that the Englishman invariably says of the Spaniard, that while other nations show differences of



manner changing from class to class, the Spaniard is always a 'gentleman'. The word 'gentleman' is a very meagre word, but on the whole the man who uses it best means the tradition of the Middle Ages, and especially of the fighting men which the Middle Ages produced, and the Spaniard everywhere shows the external qualities of those men. For instance, you cannot insult him with impunity, and that characteristic, though we often write it down, is one which in other nations is somewhat rare. Take the modern for all in all, and outside Spain, if you insult him he will usually argue.

Finally, the Spaniards are bound together by their isolation. From the Straits of Gibraltar to the Pyrenees, different as province is from province, you feel everywhere something quite separate from that which lies north of the Pyrenees, and from the Pyrenees on, all over the west of Europe. Roads are an exception, paths the rule; the hours of meals, the very habit in the wearing of the clothes, the form of salutation, the mule taking the place of the horse, the perceptible restraint in every kind of converse, all these mark out the harsh soil which lends a perpetual note of nobility to the story of Europe. No man who has known Spain but would be able to say, if he were taken there blindfold, and suddenly shown his surroundings, 'This is Spain.' The frontier is sharp, the division clear, the isolation absolute.

The limits of these few pages forbid me a thousand things in this respect. I wish I could describe (for instance) how there is in every Spanish building, from the least to the greatest, something at once severe and strange. Bowling into that great harbour of Barcelona one sees the Customs House, a building with wings. Coming over the northern slopes of the Guadarrama one sees Segovia sailing out in some immortal way as though the cathedral and palace intended to attempt the air. Spain lives, and will revive by such imaginations



It should be added, by way of closing these few notes, that the Spanish man is not only silent (which is perhaps a fault in him) but square, and so healthy in his limbs and in his mind that when he is rested and can speak again something will be changed in Europe.

## The Portrait of a Child    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

IN a garden which must, I think, lie somewhat apart and enclosed in one of the valleys of central England, you came across the English grass in summer beneath the shade of a tree; you were running, but your arms were stretched before you in a sort of dance and balance as though you rather belonged to the air and to the growing things about you and above you than to the earth over which you passed; and you were not three years old.

As, in jest, this charming vision was recorded by a camera which some guest had with him, a happy accident (designed, for all we know, by whatever powers arrange such things, an accident of the instrument or of the plate upon which your small, happy, advancing figure was recorded) so chanced that your figure, when the picture was printed, shone all around with light.

I cannot, as I look at it now before me and as I write these words, express, however much I may seek for expression, how great a meaning underlies that accident nor how full of fate and of reason and of suggested truth that aureole grows as I gaze. Your innocence is beatified by it, and takes on with majesty the glory which lies behind all innocence, but which our eyes can never see. Your happiness seems in that mist of light to be removed and permanent; the common world in which you are moving passes, through this trick of the lens, into a stronger world more apt for such a sight, and one in which I am half persuaded (as I still look upon the picture) blessedness is not a rare adventure, but something native and secure.

Little child, the trick which the camera has played means more and more as I still watch your picture, for there is present in that light not only blessedness, but holiness as



well. The lightness of your movement and of your poise (as though you were blown like a blossom along the tops of the grass) is shone through, and your face, especially its ready and wondering laughter, is inspired, as though the Light had filled it from within; so that, looking thus, I look not on, but through. I say that in this portrait which I treasure there is not only blessedness, but holiness as well—holiness which is the cause of blessedness and which contains it, and by which secretly all this world is sustained.

Now there is a third thing in your portrait, little child. That accident of light, light all about you and shining through your face, is not only blessed nor only holy, but it is also sacred, and with that thought there returns to me as I look what always should return to man if he is to find any stuff or profit in his consideration of divine things. In blessedness there is joy for which here we are not made, so that we catch it only in glimpses or in adumbrations. And in holiness, when we perceive it we perceive something far off; it is that from which we came and to which we should return; yet holiness is not a human thing. But things sacred—things devoted to a purpose, things about which there lies an awful necessity of sacrifice, things devoted and necessarily suffering some doom—these are certainly of this world; that, indeed, all men know well at last, and find it part of the business through which they needs must pass. Human memories, since they are only memories; human attachments, since they are offered up and end; great human fears and hopeless human longings—these are sacred things attached to a victim and to a sacrifice; and in this picture of yours, with the light so glorifying you all round, no one can doubt who sees it but that the sacredness of human life will be yours also; that is, you must learn how it is offered up to some end and what a sacrifice is there.

I could wish, as I consider this, that the camera had played no such trick, and had not revealed in that haze of awful



meaning all that lies beyond the nature of you, child. But it is a truth which is so revealed; and we may not, upon a penalty more terrible than death, neglect any ultimate truth concerning our mortal way.

Your feet, which now do not seem to press upon the lawn across which they run, have to go more miles than you can dream of, through more places than you could bear to hear, and they must be directed to a goal which will not in your very young delight be mentioned before you, or of which, if it is mentioned, you will not understand by name; and your little hands which you bear before you with the little gesture of flying things, will grasp most tightly that which can least remain and will attempt to fashion what can never be completed, and will caress that which will not respond to the caress. Your eyes, which are now so principally filled with innocence that that bright quality drowns all the rest, will look upon so much of deadly suffering and of misuse in men, that they will very early change themselves in kind; and all your face, which now vaguely remembers nothing but the early vision from which childhood proceeds, will grow drawn and self-guarded, and will suffer some agonies, a few despairs, innumerable fatigues, until it has become the face of a woman grown. Nor will this sacred doom about you, which is that of all mankind, cease or grow less or be mitigated in any way; it will increase as surely and as steadily as increase the number of the years, until at last you will lay down the daylight and the knowledge of daylit things as gladly as now you wake from sleep to see them.

For you are sacred, and all those elders about you, whose solemn demeanour now and then startles you into a pretty perplexity which soon calls back their smiles, have hearts only quite different from your quite careless heart, because they have known the things to which, in the manner of victims, they are consecrated.

All that by which we painfully may earn rectitude and a



proper balance in the conduct of our short affairs I must believe that you will practise; and I must believe, as I look here into your face, seeing your confident advance (as though you were flying out from your babyhood into young life without any fear), that the virtues which now surround you in a crowd and make a sort of court for you and are your angels every way, will go along with you and will stand by you to the end. Even so, and the more so, you will find (if you read this some years hence) how truly it is written. By contrast with your demeanour, with your immortal hopes, and with your pious efforts the world about you will seem darker and less secure with every passing harvest, and in proportion as you remember the childhood which has led me so to write of you, in proportion as you remember gladness and innocence with its completed joy, in that proportion will you find at least a breaking burden in the weight of this world.

Now you may say to me, little child (not now, but later on), to what purpose is all this complaint, and why should you tell me these things?

It is because in the portrait before me the holiness, the blessedness, and therefore the sacredness are apparent that I am writing as I do. For you must know that there is a false way out and a seeming relief for the rack of human affairs, and that this way is taken by many. Since you are sacred do not take it, but bear the burden. It is the character of whatever is sacred that it does not take that way; but, like a true victim, remains to the end, ready to complete the sacrifice.

The way out is to forget that one is sacred, and this men and women do in many ways. The most of them by way of treason. They betray. They break at first uneasily, later easily, and at last unconsciously, the word which each of us has passed before He was born in Paradise. All men and all women are conscious of that word, for though their lips



cannot frame it here, and though the terms of the pledge are forgotten, the memory of its obligation fills the mind. But there comes a day, and that soon in the lives of many, when to break it once is to be much refreshed and to seem to drop the burden; and in the second and the third time it is done, and the fourth it is done more easily—until at last there is no more need for a man or a woman to break that pledged word again and once again; it is broken for good and for all. This is one most common way in which the sacred quality is lost: the way of treason. Round about such as choose this kind of relief grows a habit and an air of treason. They betray all things at last, and even common friendship is at last no longer theirs. The end of this false issue is despair.

Another way is to take refuge from ourselves in pleasures, and this is easily done, not by the worse, but by the better sort; for there are some, some few, who would never betray nor break their ancient word, but who, seeing no meaning in a sacrifice nor in a burden, escape from it through pleasure as through a drug, and this pleasure they find in all manner of things, and always that spirit near them which would destroy their sacred mark, persuades them that they are right, and that in such pursuits the sacrifice is evaded. So some will steep themselves in rhyme, some in landscapes, some in pictures, some in the watching of the complexity and change of things, some in music, some in action, some in mere ease. It seems as though the men and women who would thus forget their sacredness are better loved and better warned than those who take the other path, for they never forget certain gracious things which should be proper to the mind, nor do they lose their friends. But that they have taken a wrong path you may easily perceive from this sign: that these pleasures, like any other drug, do not feed or satisfy, but must be increased with every dose, and even so soon pall and are continued not because they are pleasures



any longer, but because, dull though they have become, without them there is active pain.

Take neither the one path nor the other, but retain, I beseech you, when the time comes, that quality of sacredness of which I speak, for there is no alternative. Some trouble fell upon our race, and all of us must take upon ourselves the business and the burden. If you will attempt any way out at all it will but lead you to some worse thing. We have not all choices before us, but only one of very few, and each of those few choices is mortal, and all but one is evil.

You should remember this also, dear little child, that at the beginning—oh, only at the very beginning of life—even your reason that God gave may lead you wrong. For with those memories strong upon you of perfect will, of clear intelligence, and of harmonious beauty all about, you will believe the world in which you stand to be the world from which you have come and to which you are also destined. You have but to treat this world for but a very little while as though it were the thing you think it to find it is not so.

Do you know that that which smells most strongly in this life of immortality, and which a poet has called 'the ultimate outpost of eternity', is insecure and perishes? I mean the passionate affection of early youth. If that does not remain, what then do you think can remain? I tell you that nothing which you take to be permanent round about you when you are very young is more than the symbol or clothes of permanence. Another poet has written, speaking of the chalk hills:

Only a little while remain  
The Downs in their solemnity.

Nor is this saying forced. Men and women cannot attach themselves even to the hills where they first played.

Some men, wise but unilluminated, and not conscious of that light which I here physically see shining all round and through you in the picture which is before my eyes as I

write, have said that to die young and to end the business early was a great blessing. We do not know. But we do know that to die long after and to have gone through the business must be blessed, since blessedness and holiness and sacredness are bound together in one.

But, of these three, be certain that sacredness is your chief business, blessedness after your first childhood you will never know, and holiness you may only see as men see distant mountains lifted beyond a plain; it cannot be your habitation. Sacredness, which is the mark of that purpose whose heir is blessedness, whose end is holiness, will be upon you until you die; maintain it, and let it be your chief concern, for though you neglect it, it will remain and avenge itself.

All this I have seen in your picture as you go across the grass, and it was an accident of the camera that did it. If anyone shall say these things do not attach to the portrait of a child, let him ask himself whether they do not attach to the portrait that might be drawn, did human skill suffice, of the life of a woman or a man which springs from the demeanour of childhood; or let him ask himself whether, if a face in old age and that same face in childhood were equally and as by a revelation set down each in its full truth, and the growth of the one into the other were interpreted by a profound intelligence, what I have said would not be true of all that little passage of ours through the daylight.



## The Love of England



LOVE of country is general to mankind, yet is not the love of country a general thing to be described by a general title. Love changes with the object of love. The country loved determines the nature of its services.

The love of England has in it the love of landscape, as has the love of no other country; it has in it as has the love of no other country, the love of friends. Less than the love of other countries has it in it the love of what may be fixed in a phrase or well set down in words. It lacks, alas, the love of some interminable past, nor does it draw its liveliness from any great succession of centuries. Say that ten centuries made a soil, and that in that soil four centuries more produced a tree, and that that tree was England, then you will know to what the love of England is in most men directed. For most men who love England know so little of her first thousand years that when they hear the echoes of them or see visions of them, they think they are dealing with a foreign thing. All Englishmen are clean cut off from their long past which ended when the last Mass was sung at Westminster.

The love of England has in it no true plains but fens, low hills, and distant mountains. No very ancient towns, but comfortable, small and ordered ones, which love to dress themselves with age. The love of England concerns itself with trees. Accident has given to the lovers of England no long pageantry of battle. Nature has given Englishmen an appetite for battle, and between the two men who love England make a legend for themselves of wars unfought, and of arms permanently successful; though arms were they thus always successful would not be arms at all.

The greatness of the English soul is best discovered in



that strong rebuke of excesses, principally of excess in ignorance, which a minority of Englishmen perpetually express, but which has not sufficed as yet to save the future of England. In no other land will you so readily discover critics of that land ready to bear all for their right to doubt the common policy; but though you will nowhere discover such men so readily, nowhere will you discover them so impotent or so few.

The love of England breeds in those who cherish it an attachment to institutions which is half reverential, but also half despairing. In its reverence this appetite produces one hundred living streams of action and of vesture and of custom. In its despair, in its refusal to consider upon what theory the institution lies, it permits the institution to sterilize with age and to grow fantastic.

The love of England has never destroyed, but at times, and again at closer and at closer times (while we have lived), it has failed to save. Yet it will save England in the end. Men are more bound together by this music in their souls than by any other, wherever England is or is spoken of by Englishmen. Here you may discover what religion has been to many, and also you may discover here how legend and how epics arise. In men cut off from England, the love of England grows into a set repetitive thing, a thing of peculiar strength yet almost barren. Nourished and exemplified by England, flourishing upon the field of England, the love of England is a love of the very earth: of the smell of growing things and of certain skies, and of tides in river-mouths, and of belts of sea.

If a man would understand this great thing England which is now in peril and which has so worked throughout the world, he must not consider the accident of England's success and failure, nor certain empty lands filled without battle, nor others ruined by folly, nor certain arts singularly discovered and perfected by England, nor other arts as



singularly neglected and decayed. Nor must he contrast the passionate love of England with some high religion of which it takes the place, nor with some active work in contrast with which it seems so empty and unproducing a thing. He must not set it against a creed (it is not so high as that), nor against a conquest or a true empire such as Spain and Rome possessed.

If a man would understand the love of England he must do what hardly anyone would dare to do: that is, he must clearly envisage England defeated in a final war and ask himself, 'What should I do then?'

## On Sacramental Things    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

IT is good for a man's soul to sit down in the silence by himself and to think of those things which happen by some accident to be in communion with the whole world. If he has not the faculty of remembering these things in their order and of calling them up one after another in his mind, then let him write them down as they come to him upon a piece of paper. They will comfort him; they will prove a sort of solace against the expectation of the end. To consider such things is a sacramental occupation. And yet the more I think of them the less I can quite understand in what elements their power consists.

A woman smiling at a little child, not knowing that others see her, and holding out her hands towards it, and in one of her hands flowers; an old man, lean and active, with an eager face, walking at dusk upon a warm and windy evening westward towards a clear sunset below dark and flying clouds; a group of soldiers, seen suddenly in manœuvres, each man intent upon his business, all working at the wonderful trade, taking their places with exactitude and order and yet with elasticity; a deep, strong tide running back to the sea, going noiselessly and flat and black and smooth, and heavy with purpose under an old wall; the sea smell of a Channel seaport town; a ship coming up at one out of the whole sea when one is in a little boat and is waiting for her, coming up at one with her great sails merry and every one doing its work, with the life of the wind in her, and a balance, rhythm, and give in all that she does which marries her to the sea—whether it be a fore and aft rig and one sees only great lines of the white, or a square rig and one sees what is commonly and well called a leaning tower of canvas, or that primal rig, the triangular sail, that cuts through the



airs of the world and clove a way for the first adventures, whatever its rig, a ship so approaching an awaiting boat from which we watch her is one of the things I mean.

I would that the taste of my time permitted a lengthy list of such things: they are pleasant to remember! They do so nourish the mind! A glance of sudden comprehension mixed with mercy and humour from the face of a lover or a friend; the noise of wheels when the guns are going by; the clatter-clank-clank of the pieces and the shouted halt at the head of the column; the noise of many horses, the metallic but united and harmonious clamour of all those ironed hoofs, rapidly occupying the highway; chief and most persistent memory, a great hill when the morning strikes it and one sees it up before one round the turning of a rock after the long passes and despairs of the night.

When a man has journeyed and journeyed through those hours in which there is no colour or shape, all along the little hours that were made for sleep and when, therefore, the waking soul is bewildered or despairs, the morning is always a resurrection—but especially when it reveals a height in the sky.

This last picture I would particularly cherish, so great a consolation is it, and so permanent a grace does it lend later to the burdened mind of a man.

For when a man looks back upon his many journeys—so many rivers crossed, and more than one of them forded in peril; so many swinging mountain roads, so many difficult steeps and such long wastes of plains—of all the pictures that impress themselves by the art or kindness of whatever god presides over the success of journeys, no picture more remains than that picture of a great hill when the day first strikes it after the long burden of the night.

Whatever reasons a man may have for occupying the darkness with his travel and his weariness, those reasons must be out of the ordinary and must go with some bad



strain upon the mind. Perhaps one undertook the march from an evil necessity under the coercion of other men, or perhaps in terror, hoping that the darkness might hide one, or perhaps for cool, dreading the unnatural heat of noon in a desert land; perhaps haste, which is in itself so wearying a thing, compelled one, or perhaps anxiety. Or perhaps, most dreadful of all, one hurried through the night afoot because one feared what otherwise the night would bring, a night empty of sleep and a night whose dreams were waking dreams and evil.

But whatever prompts the adventure or the necessity, when the long burden has been borne, and when the turn of the hours has come; when the stars have grown paler; when colour creeps back greyly and uncertainly to the earth, first into the greens of the high pastures, then here and there upon a rock or a pool with reeds, while all the air, still cold, is full of the scent of morning; while one notices the imperceptible disappearance of the severities of Heaven until at last only the morning star hangs splendid; when in the end of that miracle the landscape is fully revealed, and one finds into what country one has come; then a great hill before one, losing the forests upwards into rock and steep meadow upon its sides, and towering at last into the peaks and crests of the inaccessible places, gives a soul to the new land. . . . The sun, in a single moment and with the immediate summons of a trumpet-call, strikes the spear-head of the high places, and at once the valley, though still in shadow, is transfigured, and with the daylight all manner of things have come back to the world.

Hope is the word which gathers the origins of those things together, and hope is the seed of what they mean, but that new light and its new quality is more than hope. Livelihood is come back with the sunrise, and the fixed certitude of the soul; number and measure and comprehension have returned, and a just appreciation of all reality is the gift of the new day.



Glory (which, if men would only know it, lies behind all true certitude) illumines and enlivens the seen world, and the living light makes of the true things now revealed something more than truth absolute; they appear as truth acting and creative.

This first shaft of the sun is to that hill and valley what a word is to a thought. It is to that hill and valley what verse is to the common story told; it is to that hill and valley what music is to verse. And there lies behind it, one is very sure, an infinite progress of such exaltations, so that one begins to understand, as the pure light shines and grows and as the limit of shadow descends the vast shoulder of the steep, what has been meant by those great phrases which still lead on, still comfort, and still make darkly wise, the uncomforted wondering of mankind. Such is the famous phrase: 'Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man what things God has prepared for those that serve Him.'

So much, then, is conveyed by a hill-top at sunrise when it comes upon the traveller or the soldier after the long march of night, the bending of the shoulders, and the emptiness of the dark.

Many other things put one into communion with the whole world.

Who does not remember coming over a lifting road to a place where the ridge is topped, and where, upon the farther side, a broad landscape, novel or endeared by memory (for either is a good thing), bursts upon the seized imagination as a wave from the open sea, swelling up an inland creek, breaks and bursts upon the rocks of the shore? There is a place where a man passes from the main valley of the Rhone over into the valley of the Isère, and where the Grésivaudan so suddenly comes upon him. Two gates of limestone rock, high as the first shoulders of the mountains, lead into the valley which they guard; it is a province of itself, a level



floor of thirty miles, nourished by one river, and walled in up to the clouds on either side.

Or, again, in the champagne country, moving between great blocks of wood in the Forest of Rheims and always going upward as the ride leads him, a man comes to a point whence he suddenly sees all that vast plain of the invasions stretching out to where, very far off against the horizon, two days away, twin summits mark the whole site sharply with a limit as a frame marks a picture or a punctuation a phrase.

There is another place more dear to me but which I doubt whether any other but a native of that place can know. After passing through the plough lands of an empty plateau, a traveller breaks through a little fringe of chestnut hedge and perceives at once before him the wealthiest and the most historical of European things, the chief of the great capitals of Christendom and the arena in which is now debated (and has been for how long!) the Faith, the chief problem of this world.

Apart from landscape other things belong to this contemplation: Notes of music, and, stronger even than repeated and simple notes of music, a subtle scent and its association, a familiar printed page. Perhaps the test of these sacramental things is their power to revive the past.

There is a story translated into the noblest of English writing by Dasent. It is to be found in his *Tales from the Norse*. It is called the 'Story of the Master Maid'.

A man had found in his youth a woman on the Norwegian hills: this woman was faerie, and there was a spell upon her. But he won her out of it in various ways, and they crossed the sea together, and he would bring her to his father's house, but his father was a King. As they went oversea together alone, he said and swore to her that he would never forget how they had met and loved each other without warning, but by an act of God, upon the Dovrefjeld. Come



near his father's house, the ordinary influences of the ordinary day touched him; he bade her enter a hut and wait a moment until he had warned his father of so strange a marriage; she, however, gazing into his eyes, and knowing how the divine may be transformed into the earthly, quite as surely as the earthly into the divine, makes him promise that he will not eat human food. He sits at his father's table, still steeped in her and in the seas. He forgets his vow and eats human food, and at once he forgets.

Then follows much for which I have not space, but the woman in the hut by her magic causes herself to be at last sent for to the father's palace. The young man sees her, and is only slightly troubled as by a memory which he cannot grasp. They talk together as strangers; but looking out of the window by accident the King's son sees a bird and its mate; he points them out to the woman, and she says suddenly: 'So was it with you and me high up upon the Dovrefjeld.' Then he remembers all.

Now that story is a symbol, and tells the truth. We see some one thing in this world, and suddenly it becomes particular and sacramental; a woman and a child, a man at evening, a troop of soldiers; we hear notes of music, we smell the smell that went with a passed time, or we discover after the long night a shaft of light upon the tops of the hills at morning: there is a resurrection, and we are refreshed and renewed.

But why all these things are so neither I nor any other man can tell.

## On a Piece of Rope



THE other day as I was sailing down channel at dawn I contemplated a piece of rope (which was my only companion) and considered how many things attached to it, and of what sort these were.

I considered in the first place (as it has become my unhappy custom to do about most things) how mighty a theme this piece of rope would be for the modern rubbish, for the modern abandonment of common sense. I considered how many thousand people would, in connexion with that bit of rope, write that man had developed it through countless ages of upward striving from the first dim savage regions where some half-apelike creature first twisted grass, to the modern factory of Lord Ropemaker-in-chief, which adorns some Midland Hell to-day. I considered how people made up history of that kind entirely out of their heads and how it sold by the wagon-load. I considered how the other inventions which I had seen arise with my own eyes had always come suddenly, with a burst, unexpectedly, from the oddest quarters. I considered how not even this glaring experience was of the least use in preventing fools from talking folly.

Next I considered, as I watched that bit of rope, the curious historical fact of anonymity. Someone first thought out the bowline knot. Who was it? He never left a record. It seems that he desired to leave none. There would appear to be only two kinds of men who care about leaving a record of themselves: artists and soldiers. Innumerable other creators since the world began are content, it would seem, with creation and despise fame. I have often wondered, for instance, who invented forming fours. I very much doubt his being a soldier. Certainly he was not a poet.



If he had been a soldier he would not have let you forget him in a hurry—and as for poets, they are good for nothing and could no more invent a useful thing than fly.

Note you, that forming fours is something which must have been invented at one go. There is no 'Development' about it. It is a simple, immediate, and revolutionary trick. It was not—and then it was. Note you also that until the trick of forming fours was discovered, no conversion from line into column was possible, and therefore no quick handling of men. So with knots and so with splicing. There are, indeed, one or two knots that have names of men attached to them. There is Walker's knot, for instance. But Walker (if Walker it was who invented it) made no great effort to perpetuate his fame, and all the common useful knots without which civilization could not go on, and on which the State depends, were modestly given to mankind as a Christian man, now dead, used to give his charity! without advertisement.

And this consideration of knots led me to another, which was of those things which had been done with ropes and which without ropes would never have happened. The sailing of the sea, the execution of countless innocent men, and now and then, by accident, of somebody who really deserved death: The tying up of bundles, which is the solid foundation of all trade: The lasso for the catching of beasts: The hobbling of horses: The strengthening of man through pulleys: The casting of bridges over chasms: The sending of great messages to beleaguered cities: The escapes of kings and heroes. All these would not have been but for ropes.

As I looked at the rope I further considered how strange it was that ropes had never been worshipped. Men have worshipped the wall, and the post, and the sun, and the house. They have worshipped their food and their drink. They have, you may say, ceremonially worshipped their clothes; they have worshipped their headgear especially,



crowns, mitres, ta-ra-ras; and they have worshipped the music which they have created. But I never heard of anyone worshipping a rope. Nor have I ever heard of a rope being made a symbol. I can recollect but one case in which it appears in a coat-of-arms, and that is, I think, in the case of the County or City of Chester, where, as I seem to remember, the Chester knot is emblazoned. But no one used it that I can remember in the Crusades, when all coats-of-arms were developing. And this is odd, for they used every other conceivable thing—windmills, spurs, boots, roses, staffs, waves of the sea, the crescent moon, lions and leopards and even the elephant, and black men's heads, birds, horses, unicorns, griffons, jolly little dogs, chess boards, eagles—every conceivable thing human or imaginary they pressed into service; but no ropes.

One would have thought that the rope would have been a basis of measurement, but there are only two ways in which it comes in for so obvious a purpose, and one of these is lost. There was the old Norman *brap*, which was vague enough, and there is the cable, the tenth of a sea mile. But the rope does not come into any other measurement; for you cannot count the knots on a log line as a form of measurement with ropes. The measurement itself is not drawn from the rope but from geographical degrees.

Further, I considered the rope (as it lay there) on its literary side. No one has written verses to ropes. There is one verse about ropes, or mainly about ropes in a chaunty, but I do not think there is any poem dedicated to ropes and dealing mainly with ropes. They are about the only thing upon which verse has not been accumulated—bad verse—for centuries.

Yet the rope has one very important place in literature which is not recognized. It is this: that ropes more than any other subject are, I think, a test of a man's power of exposition in prose. If you can describe clearly without a diagram



the proper way of making this or that knot, then you are a master of the English tongue. You are not only a master—you are a sign, a portent, a new discoverer, an exception among your fellow men, a unique fellow. For no one yet in this world surely has attained to lucidity in this most difficult branch of all expression. I find over and over again in the passages of those special books which talk of ropes, such language as: 'This is a very useful knot and is made as follows:—a bight is taken in the standing apart and is then run over right handedly, that is with the sun or, again, the hands of a watch (only backward), and then under the running part and so through both times and hauled tight by the free end.' But if any man should seek to save his life on a dark night in a sudden gust of wind by this description he would fail: he would drown.

Take the simplest of them. Take the Clove-Hitch. Write a sentence in English which will explain (without a picture) how to cast a Clove-Hitch. I do not think you will succeed.

Talking of this literary side of ropes, see how the rope has accumulated, like everything else, a vast army of technical terms, a whole regiment of words which are its family and of which it is very jealous. People who write of ropes are hardly able to keep off these words although they mean nothing to the reader and are but a darkening and a confusion. There is stranding and half-stranding, and there is parcelling, serving and whipping, and crowning and all the rest of it. How came such words there? Who thought them to the point? On what possible metaphors were they founded? In nearly all other groups of technical words you can trace the origin, but here you cannot. Nor can you find the origin of the names for all the hundred things that are made of ropes. Why is a gasket called a gasket? Why is a grommet called a grommet? Why is a true lover's-knot called a true lover's-knot? or a tack a tack? Now and then there is a glimmering of sense. Halyard is obvious and sheet

is explicable. Outhaul and downhaul might be Greek or German so plainly do they reveal their make-up. But what are you to make of bobstay, parrel, runner, and shroud? Why are ratlines ratlines? What possible use could they be to a rat? They are no good for *leaving* a sinking ship, though excellent for running up out of the rising water. 'Springs' I half understand, but whence in the name of Chelsea came 'painter'? Reef points might pass. That is if you admit reef—which, I suppose, is the same as 'reave' and 'rove'—but, great heavens, where did they get 'ear-rings'—and why do you 'mouse' hooks, and what have cats to do with anchors?

A ship is a little world, a little universe, and it has a language of its own, which disdains the land and its reasons.



## On Truth and the Admiralty    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

WHAT a pleasure it will be—a minor pleasure, I admit, but life is complex and it is difficult to establish values—what a pleasure it will be when maps and statistics return!

To-day, in this delightful year of 1922, they are all at sixes and sevens. So is everything else, you may say, especially currency—let alone morals. But still, one regrets maps and statistics most because to lose them is to lose one's moorings. We are all adrift without them.

What fun it used to be before the war to discuss the various 'Powers' (as they were called). There was a Power called 'Germany', and there was another called 'Austria', or sometimes 'Austria-Hungary', and there was one called 'Russia', and there was 'the Anglo-Saxon Race', too, and all sorts of things.

When I was a very little boy there was an enormous green blob over the bottom right-hand corner of the map, marked 'Turkey', and I remember a learned man telling me that a bit called 'Rumania' did not really count as Turkey, and a bit called 'Servia' was really quite separate; and they were marked round with a dotted line. But I thought this man an interfering hair-splitter. I was a human being, though so young, and I liked to stand squarely upon my two feet and to know exactly where I was. So I thought of a country called 'Turkey', inhabited by people called 'Turks', and I used to see, wandering all over their country, animals called 'Turkeys', which, I had been told by some foolish older person, took their name from this district. The young are not yet broken-in to change.

So, on through my early and middle life there was a recognizable Europe. One knew the debatable points (at



least, on the map), but there were frontiers. There were powerful centres also, and anomalies to season the dish.

Where is all that to-day?

Thank God, this island at least has a frontier. It is the inviolate sea. I remember a boy at school who used to read the passage as though it ran 'the violet sea', so as to make sense, and I applauded him still. 'Surrounded by the violet sea', read this sturdy youth. We all knew what 'violet' meant: it was a sort of blue. But what the devil was 'inviolable'? Lucidity is the soul of style. Therefore, I say, I applaud that youth.

Anyhow, colour or no, brown, green, or grey, the sea sounds all round England. Those who live in this island know where it begins and where it ends, in spite of the bookish people who say that one frontier is the enemy's coastline. (Heaven have mercy upon them, they are living in the past. Some day I will show them an aeroplane!) North of the Pyrenees nobody on the Continent can say as much to-day: since the war! One country has a frontier expanding outwards, bulging, and another has ceased to be a country; and a third, whilst still a country, has but a theoretical frontier which feels like touch-paper, or like burnt rag; and yet another is a new country, sprung up out of the effect of the war, and with frontiers which are to the old strict frontiers what the chopped-up prose of the new poets is to Pope or Dryden.

I do wish the maps would come back, but I fear they will not come back in my time. I see that, in despair, the people who must sell maps or perish are taking to printing merely physical maps, maps of mountains and rivers and seas. They are returning to Pan and the original gods of this ironic globe. They are (virtually) saying: 'Mankind has abandoned its job. Men are no longer political. We yield to you, spirits of the stream and of the hill, the throne we once possessed.'

I do not say that the advertisers, printers, company



promoters, touts, circularizers, boomsters, spell-binders, and all the rest of the happy throng who are producing the new atlases, use these very words; but that is what they are at, all the same.

Only the other day a man showed me a superb map of Mexico and the United States (as we used to call them in our dear old-fashioned language) up to about the cañon of the Colorado. I said to him: 'It is very beautiful, and the contours stand out. The rivers are of a bold blue: the swamps are green: the mountains brown. But I do not see the division between the United States and Mexico.' He said to me: 'It has not yet been put in because of the League of Nations'—a funny reason. . . .

Then there are statistics. Anything in the world can be proved by statistics, and it was half the occupation of a serious man with a bee in his bonnet (as most serious men have) to work statistics, to knead them with the fists, and to tread them with the feet, and to juggle them with the thumbs, and to smooth them down with the palm, and to pat them into shape with the fingers, and to square them off with a trowel, and to bake them very cunningly into a hard form. He, having done this, would prove to you anything on earth—I mean before the year 1914. He would prove to you that the French were going down and the Germans going up: that everybody was going to talk English in fifty years: that London (oh! joyful thought!) would stretch out beyond Dorking and Reigate, beyond Hertford and Marlow, within the life of a man: that the United States (I mean America) would easily grow to eat up Europe: that most of the African deserts would be filled with cads, and that the greatness of a nation depended not upon its religion, still less upon its morals, hardly at all upon its courage or intelligence, but wholly upon its hoicking out of coal.

I do wish those statistics would come back! We have had none of them for so many years! We cannot talk of the



birth-rate of Egypt or Persia. We no longer know what is meant by export and import . . . and with these two dread words another suggestion works its way into my mind.

The war has produced propaganda. Truth took to its bed in the spring of 1915 and died unregretted, with few attendants, about a year later. Everything since then has been propaganda.

It is an imperative duty to serve one's country, and one's country in danger of death had to be served by silence and by lies. But now the root has struck, and all this lying and all this silence has become a habit. So to-day, when you read this or that in a paper, you know very well that you are not reading any cold truth at all, but an advertisement. Time was, if a public document said: 'The road from Pekaboo to Chakanugga is under repair after the third mile-stone', you believed it and went round by a side way. But to-day, when you read such things, you know that it means, not that the road is under repair, but that it is to the advantage of some man, corporation, policy or State to suggest that it is under repair. . . . If it *is* under repair, well and good . . . but it is a pure chance. They use the truth when it suits them but only because it suits them. Most of the time they lie.

And here, like a man discovering a diamond in blue clay, let me admit the great exception. Through all this welter of falsehood the Admiralty stands firm. I pick up my charts, I read my various 'Pilots' (especially my beloved 'English Channel Pilot I'), and the truth comes out, august, white-robed, with level brows, contemptuous of advocacy. The documents of this great Department please me like the Creed. Their level voice is the voice of doom. '*Halnacker Mill open of Bognor Church Spire leads through the Swatchway.*' It is true that the sweeps have fallen from Halnacker Mill and you cannot see it as well from sea as you used to do. If you will allow me (without offence, I hope) to tell you the plain truth, not one man in fifty in one day out of ten has



ever seen Halnacker Mill from outside the Owers. All he sees, even in fair weather, is a sort of blur, which he hopes to be Sussex, or Paradise. Anyhow, the document, the record, is there. If you can see Halnacker Mill, even with the sweeps gone down, and if you open it east of Bognor Church Spire, you will get through the Swatchway: if you don't you will strike the Owers, and I for one shall not care.

So it is with all these pronouncements of marble and of bronze.

‘NOTE.—*The mariner will do well to avoid the passage of the Looe Stream at the fall of night against an adverse tide, especially if the wind is freshening from the south-west.*’ He will, by God! This is not a statement to frighten Germans or to pacify Jugo-Slavs. It is the thing itself. Stark Truth: Reality, the eldest-born Daughter of Heaven; that Goddess whom some call Aletheia from her lovely face, and others Ananke from her damnable muscles, the grip of whose hand when you ask her to lead you through this tangled world is extraordinarily firm, tactless, and painful.

I then, who love statistics and maps, shall, for the next few months or years, confine myself to the publications of the Admiralty in the ‘Channel Pilot’ I and II, in ‘The West Coast Pilot’, and the rest. Their pictures of the British coast are the best I know. The information of the Admiralty is exact, and its motives (alone of the motives now governing our chaotic world) are pure.

## On Immortality



HERE and there, scattered rarely among men as men are now, you will find one man who does not pursue the same ends as his fellows; but in a peculiar manner leads his life as though his eyes were fixed upon some distant goal or his appetites subjected to some constant and individual influence.

Such a man may be doing any one of many things. He may be a poet, and his occupation may be the writing of good verse, pleased at its sound and pleased as well by the reflection of the pleasure it will give to others. Or he may be devoted, and follow a creed, a single truth or a character which he loves, and whose influence and glory he makes it his business to propagate. Or he may be but a worker in some material, a carver in wood, or a manager of commercial affairs, or a governor and administrator of men, and yet so order his life that his work and his material are his object: not his gain in the end—not his appreciable and calculable gain at least—nor his immediate and ephemeral pleasures.

Such men, if you will examine them, will prove intent upon one ultimate completion of their being which is also (whether they know it or not) a reward, and those who have carefully considered the matter and give it expression say that such men are out a-hunting for Immortality.

Now what is that? There was a man, before the Normans came to England, who sailed from the highest Scandinavian mountains, I think, towards these shores, and landing, fought against men and was wounded so that he was certain to die. When they asked him why he had undertaken that adventure, he answered: 'That my name might live between the lips of men.'



The young, the adventurous, the admired—how eagerly and how properly do they not crave for glory. Fame has about it a divine something as it were an echo of perfect worship and of perfect praise, which, though it is itself imperfect, may well deceive the young, the adventurous, and the admired. How great to think that things well done and the enlargement of others shall call down upon our names, even when all is lost but the mere names, a continuous and an increasing benediction. Nay, more than this: how great to think of the noise only of an achievement, and to be sure that the poem written, the carving concluded, or the battle won, the achievement of itself, though the name of the achiever be perished or unknown, shall awake those tremendous echoes.

But wait a moment. What is that thing which so does and so desires? What end does *it* find in glory? *It* is not the receiver of the benefit; *it* will not hear that large volume of recognition and of salute. Twist it how you will no end is here, nor in such a pursuit is the pursuer satisfied.

It is true that men who love to create for themselves imaginary stuff, and to feed their cravings, if they cannot with substance then with dreams, perpetually pretend a satisfaction in such acquirements which the years as they proceed tell them with increasing iteration that they do not feel. The young, the adventurous, the admired, may at first be deceived by such a glamour, and it is in the providential scheme of human affairs, and it is for the good of us all that the pleasing cheat should last while the good things are doing. Thus do substantial verse and noble sculpture and building whose stuff is lasting and whose beauty is almost imperishable, rise to the advantage of mankind—but oh! there is no lasting in the dream.

There comes a day of truth inwardly but ineradicably perceived, when such things, such aspirations, are clearly known for what they are. Of all the affections that pass, of



all those things which being made by a power itself perishable, must be unmade again, some may be less, others more lasting, but not one remains for ever.

Nor is this all. What is it, I say, which did the thing and suffered the desire? Not the receiver, still less the work achieved, it was the man that so acted and so desired; and that part of him which was affected thus we call the Soul. Then, surely (one may reason) the soul has, apt to its own nature, a completion which is also a reward, and there is something before it which is not the symbol or the cheat of perfect praise, but is perfect praise; there is surely something before it which is not the symbol or the cheat of life, but life completed.

Now stand at night beneath a clear heaven solemn and severe with stars, comprehend (as the great achievement of our race permits us now to do) what an emptiness and what a scale are there, and you will easily discover in that one glance, or you will feel at least the appalling thing which tempts men to deny their immortality.

There is no man who has closely inquired upon this, and there is none who has troubled himself and admitted a reasonable anxiety upon it, who has not well retained the nature of despair. Those who approach their fellow-beings with assertion and with violence in such a matter, affirming their discovery, their conviction, or their acquired certitude, do an ill service to their kind. It is not thus that the last things should be approached nor the most tremendous problem which man is doomed to envisage be propounded and solved. Ah! the long business in this world! The way in which your deepest love goes up in nothingness and breaks away, and the way in which the strongest and the most continuous element of your dear self is dissipated and fails you in some moment; if I do not understand these things in a man nor comprehend how the turn of the years can obscure or obliterate a man's consciousness of what his



end should be, then I act in brute ignorance, or what is much worse, in lack of charity.

How should you not be persuaded, ephemeral intelligence? Does not every matter which you have held closely enough and long enough escape you and withdraw? Is not that doom true of things which were knit into us, and were of necessity, so to speak, prime parts of our being? Is it not true of the network and the structure which supports whatever we are, and without which we cannot imagine ourselves to be? We ourselves perish. Of that there is no doubt at all. One is here talking and alive. His friends are with him: on the time when they shall meet again he is utterly not there. The motionless flesh before his mourners is nothing. It is not a simulacrum, it is not an outline, it is not a recollection of the man, but rather something wholly gone useless. As for that voice, those meanings in the eyes, and that gesture of the hand, it has suddenly and entirely ceased to be.

Then how shall we deny the dreadful conclusion (to which how many elder civilizations have not turned!) that we must seek in vain for any gift to the giver for any worker's wage, or, rather, to put it more justly, for a true end to the life we lead. Yet it is not so. The conclusion is more weighty by far that all things bear their fruit: that the comprehender and the master of so much, the very *mind*, suffers to no purpose and in one moment a tragic, final, and unworthy catastrophe agrees with nothing other that we know. It is not thus of the good things of the earth that turn kindly into the earth again. It cannot be thus with that which makes of all the earth a subject thing for contemplation and for description, for understanding, and, if it so choose—for sacrifice.

Those of our race who have deliberately looked upon the scroll and found there nothing to read, who have lifted the curtain and found beyond it nothing to see, have faced their conclusions with a nobility which should determine us; for

that nobility does prove, or, if it does not prove, compels us to proclaim, that the soul of man which breeds it has somewhere a lasting home. The conclusion is imperative.

Let not anyone pretend in his faith that his faith is immediately evident and everywhere acceptable. There is in all who pretend to judgement a sense of the doubt that lies between the one conviction and the other, and all acknowledge that the scales swing normally upon the beam for normal men. But they swing—and one is the heavier.

The poets, who are our interpreters, know well and can set forth the contrast between such intimations and such despair.

The long descent of wasted days  
To these at last have led me down:  
Remember that I filled with praise  
The meaningless and doubtful ways  
That lead to an eternal town.

Moreover, since we have spoken of the night it is only reasonable to consider the alternate dawn. The quality of light, its merry action on the mind, the daylit sky under whose benediction we repose and in which our kind has always seen the picture of its final place: are these then visions and deceits?



## On Old Towns



EVERY man who has a civilized backing behind him, every man, that is, born to a citizenship which has history to nourish it, knows, loves, desires to inhabit, and returns to, the Old Towns; but the more one thinks of it the more difficult one finds it to determine in what this appetite consists.

The love of a village, of a manor, is one thing. You may stand in some place where you were born or brought up, especially if it be some place in which you passed those years in which the soul is formed to the body, between, say, seven years of age and seventeen, and you may look at the landscape of it from its height, but you will not be able to determine how much in your strong affection is of man and how much of God. True, nearly everything in a good European landscape has been moulded, touched, coloured, and in a sense made by Christian men. It is like a sort of tapestry which man has worked upon the stuff that God gave him; but, still, any such landscape from the height of one of our villages has surely more in it of God than of man. For one thing there is the sky; and then it must be admitted that the lines of the hills were there before man touched them, and though the definite outline of the woods, the careful thinning of them which allows great trees to grow, the noble choice and contrast of foliage, the sharp edge of cultivated against forest land, the careful planting of the tallest kinds of things, pine trees and elms, are all man's work; and though the sights of water in between are usually man's work also, yet in the air that clothes the scene and in all its major lines, man did not make it at all: he has but used it and improved it under the inspiration of That which made the whole.



But with the Old Towns it is not so. They please us in proportion to their apparent intensity of effort; the more man has worked the more can we embed ourselves within them. The more different is every stone from another, and the more that difference is due to the curious spirit of man the more are we pleased. We stand in little lanes where every single thing about us, except the strip of sky overhead, is man's work, and the strip of sky overhead becomes what all skies are in all pictures—something subordinate to man, an ornament.

One could make a list of the Old Towns and go on for ever: the sea-light over the red-brick of King's Lynn from the east, and the other sea-light from the south over that other King's town, Lyme Regis; the curious bunch of Rye; the hill of Poitiers all massed up with history, and in whose uneven alleys all the armies go by, from the armies of the Gauls to the army that makes a noise about them to-day; the hill of Lincoln, where one looks up from the Roman Gate to the towers completing the steep hill; the two hills of Cassel and of Montreuil, similarly packed with all that men are, have been, and remain; the quadrated towns, some surely Roman, some certainly so; Chichester, Winchester, Horsham, Oxford, Chester, and a hundred others—England is most fruitful in these; the towns that draw their life from rivers and have high steep walls of stone or brick going right down into the waters, Albi, Newcastle as it once was; in its own small way Arundel as it still is; the towns of the great flats, where men for some reason can best give rein to their fancy, Delft, Antwerp (that part of it which counts), Bruges, Louvain; Ypres also where the cooking is so vile.

One might continue for ever this futile list of towns—this is in common to them all, that wherever men come across them in travel they have a sense of home and the soul reposes.

Nowhere have I found this more than in the curious and



to some the disappointing town of Arles. Arles has about it, more than any other town I know, the sentiment of protracted human experience. They dig and find stone tools and weapons. They dig again and find marks of log huts, bronze pins, and the arms of the Gauls. And then, apparent to the eye and still living as it were, and still breathing, as it were, the upper air which is also ours, not buried away like dead things, but surviving, is Greece, is Rome, is the Dark Ages, is the Middle Ages, is the Renaissance, is the religious quarrel, is the Eighteenth Century, is the Revolution, is to-day. I have sometimes thought that if a man should go to Arles with the desire deliberately to subject himself at once to the illusion and to the reality of the past, here he could do so. He could look curiously for a day at the map and see how the Rhone had swept the place for thousands upon thousands of years, making it a sort of corner at the head of its great estuary, and later of its delta; then he might spend the day wondering at the flints and the way they were chipped, and getting into the minds of the men that made them. Then he should spend a day with bronze, and then a day with the Gaulish iron. After that, for as many weeks as he choose, let him study the stones which Greece and which Rome have still left in the public places of the city; the half of the frontal of the great temple built into his hotel; the amphitheatre upon which he suddenly comes as he wanders up a narrow modern street; the Arenae. The Dark Ages, which have left so little in Europe, have here left massive towers in which the echoes of the fighting linger, and huge rough stones which the Dark Ages did not quarry but which they moved from the palaces of the Romans to their own fortresses, and which by their very presence so removed bring back to one the long generations in which Europe slept healthily and survived.

St. Trophime is all the Middle Ages. You may walk quietly round its cloister and see those ten generations of



men, from the hugeness of the Crusades to the last delicacies of the fifteenth century. The capitals of the columns go in order, the very earliest touch on that archaic grotesque which underlies every civilization, the latest in their exact realism and their refinement, prove the decline of a whole period of the soul. Lest Arles should take up too much of this short space, I would remind the reader only of this ironical and striking thing: that on its gates as you go out of the city northward, you may see sculptured in marble what the Revolution—but a century ago—took to be a primal truth common to all mankind. It concerns the sanctity of property. Consider that doctrine to-day!

But not Arles, though it is so particular an example, not Delft, not the old English seaports which so perfectly enshrine our past, not Coutances which everyone should know, alone explain what the Old Towns are, but rather a knowledge of them all together explains it.

The Old Towns are ourselves; they are mankind. In their contortion, in their ruined regularity, in their familiar oddities, and in their awful corners of darkness, in their piled experience of the soul which has soaked right into their stone and their brick and their lime, they are the caskets of man. Note how the trees that grow by licence from the crevices of their battlements are a sort of sacramental saving things, exceptional to the fixed lines about them, and note how the grass which grows between the setts of their paving stones comes up ashamedly and yet universally, as good memories do in the oldness of the human mind, and as purity does through the complexity of living.

Which reminds me: Once there was a band of men, foolish men, Bohemian men, indebted men, who went down to paint in a silly manner, and chose a town of this sort which looked to them very old and wonderful; and there they squatted for a late summer month and talked the detestable jargon of their trade. They talked of tones and



of values and of the Square Touch, and Heaven knows what nonsense, the meanwhile daubing daub upon daub on to the canvas; praising Velasquez (which after all was right) and ridiculing the Royal Academy. They ridiculed the Royal Academy.

Well, now, these men were pleased to see in autumn grass growing between the setts of the street, especially in one steep street where they lived. It rejoiced their hearts; they said within themselves, 'This is indeed an Old Town!' But the Town Council of that town had said among themselves, 'What if it become publicly known that grass grows in our streets? We shall be thought backward; the rich will not come to visit us. We shall not make so much money, and our brothers-in-law and others indebted to us will also grow impoverished. Come! Let us pull up this grass.'

So they paid a poor man, who would otherwise have starved, the amount of his food on the condition that he should painfully pull up all the grass, which he did.

Then the artists, seeing him at work, paid him more not to pull it up. Then the Town Council, finding out this, dismissed him from their employ, and put upon the job a distant man from some outlandish county, and had him watched, and he pulled up all the grass, every blade of it, by night, but thoroughly. The next morning the artists saw what had been done, and they went out by train to another town, and bought grass seed and also a little garden soil, and the next night they scattered the soil carefully between the stones and sowed the grass seed; and the comedy is not yet ended.

There is a moral to this, but I will not write it down, for in the first place it may not be a good moral, and in the second place I have forgotten what it was.



## The Death of Robert the Strong      ~      ~      ~

UP in the higher valley of the River Sarthe, which runs between low knolls through easy meadow-land, and is a place of cattle and of pasture interspersed with woods of no great size, upon a summer morning a troop of some hundreds of men was coming down from the higher land to the crossings of the river. It was in the year 866. The older servants in the chief men's retinue could remember Charlemagne.

Two leaders rode before the troop. They were two great owners of land, and each possessed of commissions from the Imperial authority. The one had come up hastily northwards from Poitiers, the other had marched westward to join him, coming from the Beauce, with his command. Each was a *Comes*, a Lord Administrator of a countryside and its capital, and had power to levy free men. Their retainers also were many. About them there rode a little group of aides, and behind them, before the footmen, were four squadrons of mounted followers.

The force had already marched far that morning. It was winding in line down a roughly beaten road between the growing crops of the hill-side, and far off in the valley the leaders watched the distant villages, but they could see no sign of their quarry. They were hunting the pirates. The scent had been good from the very early hours when they had broken camp till lately, till mid-morning; but in the last miles of their marching it had failed them, and the accounts they received from the rare peasantry were confused.

They found a cottage of wood standing thatched near the track at the place where it left the hills for the water meadows, and here they recovered the trace of their prey. A wounded man, his right arm bound roughly with sacking, leaned



against the door of the place, and with his whole left arm pointed at a group of houses more than a mile away beyond the stream, and at a light smoke which rose into the still summer air just beyond a screen of wood in its neighbourhood. He had seen the straggling line of the Northern men an hour before, hurrying over the Down and coming towards that farm.

Of the two leaders the shorter and more powerful one, who sat his horse the less easily, and whose handling of the rein was brutally strong, rode up and questioned and re-questioned the peasant. Could he guess the numbers? It might be two hundred; it was not three. How long had they been in the countryside? Four days, at least. It was four days ago that they had tried to get into the monastery, near the new castle, and had been beaten off by the servants at the orchard wall. What damage had they done? He could not tell. The reports were few that he had heard. His cousin from up the valley complained that three oxen had been driven from his fields by night. They had stolen a chain of silver from St. Giles without respect for the shrine. They had done much more—how much he did not know. Had they left any dead? Yes, three, whom he had helped to bury. They had been killed outside the monastery wall. One of his fields was of the monastery benefice, and he had been summoned to dig the graves.

The lord who thus questioned him fixed him with straight soldierly eyes, and, learning no more, rode on by the side of his equal from Poitiers. That equal was armoured, but the lord who had spoken to the peasant, full of body and squat, square of shoulder, thick of neck, tortured by the heat, had put off from his chest and back his leather coat, strung with rings of iron. His servant had unlaced it for him some miles before, and it hung loose upon the saddle hook. He had taken off, also, the steel helm, and it hung by its strap to the same point. He preferred to take the noon sun upon his



thick hair and to risk its action than to be weighed upon longer by that iron. And this though at any moment the turn of a spinney might bring them upon some group of the barbarians.

Upon this short, resolute man, rather than upon his colleague, the expectation of the armed men was fixed. His repute had gone through all the north of Gaul with popular tales of his feats in lifting and in throwing. He was perhaps forty years of age. He boasted no lineage, but vague stories went about—that his father was from the Germanies; that his father was from the Paris land; that it was his mother who had brought him to court; that he was a noble with a mystery that forbade him to speak of his birth; that he was a slave whom the Emperor had enfranchised and to whom he had given favour; that he was a farmer's son; a yeoman.

On these things he had never spoken. No one had met men or women of his blood. But ever since his boyhood he had gone upwards in the rank of the empire, adding, also, one village to another in his possession, from the first which he had obtained no man knew how; purchasing land with the profits of office after office. He had been *Comes* of Tours, *Comes* of Auxerre, *Comes* of Nevers. He had the commission for all the military work between Loire and Seine. There were songs about him, and myths and tales of his great strength, for it was at this that the populace most wondered.

So this man rode by his colleague's side at the head of the little force, seeking for the pirates, when, unexpectedly, upon emerging from a fringe of trees that lined the flat meadows, his seat in the saddle stiffened and changed, and his eyes fired at what he saw. Two hundred yards before him was the stream, and over it the narrow stone bridge unbroken. Immediately beyond a group of huts and houses, wood and stone, and a heavy, low, round-arched bulk of a



church marked the goal of the pirates—and there they were! They had seen the imperial levy the moment that it left the trees, and they were running—tall, lanky men, unkempt, some burdened with sacks, most of them armed with battle-axe or short spear. They were making for cover in the houses of the village.

Immediately the two leaders called the marshalls of their levies, gave orders that the footmen should follow, trotted in line over the bridge at the head of the squadron, and, once the water was passed, formed into two bodies of horse and galloped across the few fields into the streets of the place.

Just as they reached the market square and the front of the old church there, the last of the marauders (retarded under the weight of some burden he would save) was caught and pinned by a short spear thrown. He fell, crying and howling in a foreign tongue to gods of his own in the northland. But all his comrades were fast in the building, and there was a loud thrusting of stone statues and heavy furniture against the doors. Then, within a moment, an arrow flashed from a window slit, just missing one of the marshals. The *Comes* of Poitiers shouted for wood to burn the defence of the door, and villagers, misliking the task, were pressed. Faggots were dragged from sheds and piled against it. Even as this work was doing, man after man fell, as the defenders shot them at short range from within the church-tower.

The first of the footmen had come up, and some half-dozen picked for marksmanship were attempting to thread with their whistling arrows the slits in the thick walls whence the bolts of the Vikings came. One such opening was caught by a lucky aim. For some moments its fire ceased, then came another arrow from it. It struck the *Comes* of Poitiers and he went down, and as he fell from his horse two servants caught him. Next, with a second shaft,



the horse was struck, and it plunged and began a panic. No servant dared stab it, but a marshal did.

Robert, that second count, the leader, had dismounted. He was in a fury, mixed with the common men, and striking at the great church door blow upon blow, having in his hand a stone so huge that even at such a moment they marvelled at him.

Unarmoured, pouring with sweat, though at that western door a great buttress still shaded him from the noonday sun, Robert the Strong thundered enormously at the oak. A hinge broke, and he heard a salute of laughter from his men. He dropped his instrument, lifted, straining, a great beam which lay there and, trundled it like a battering-ram against the second hinge. But, just as the shock came, an arrow from the tower caught him also. It struck where the neck joins the shoulder, and he went down. Even as he fell, the great door gave, and the men of the imperial levy, fighting their way in, broke upon the massed pirates that still defended the entry with a whirl of axe and sword.

Four men tended the leader, one man holding his head upon his knee, the three others making shift to lift him, to take him where he might be tended. But his body was no longer convulsed; the motions of the arms had ceased; and when the arrow was plucked at last from the wound, the thick blood hardly followed it. He was dead.

The name of this village and this church was Brissarthe; and the man who so fell, and from whose falling soldier songs and legends arose, was the first father of all the Capetians, the French kings.

From this man sprang Eudes, who defended Paris from the Sea-Rovers: Hugh Capet and Philip Augustus and Louis the Saint and Philip the Fair; and so through century after century to the kings that rode through Italy, to Henri IV, to Louis XIV in the splendour of his wars,



and to that last unfortunate who lost the Tuileries on August 10th, 1793. His line survives to-day, for its eldest heir is the man whom the Basques would follow. His expectants call him Don Carlos, and he claims the crown of Spain.

## On an Unknown Country



TEN years ago, I think, or perhaps a little less or perhaps a little more, I came in the Euston Road—that thoroughfare of Empire—upon a young man a little younger than myself whom I knew, though I did not know him very well. It was drizzling and the second-hand booksellers (who are rare in this thoroughfare) were beginning to put out the waterproof covers over their wares. This disturbed my acquaintance, because he was engaged upon buying a cheap book that should really satisfy him.

Now this was difficult, for he had no hobby, and the book which should satisfy him must be one that should describe or summon up, or, it is better to say, hint at—or, the theologians would say, reveal, or the Platonists would say *recall*—the Unknown Country, which he thought was his very home.

I had known his habit of seeking such books for two years, and had half wondered at it and half sympathized. It was an appetite partly satisfied by almost any work that brought to him the vision of a place in the mind which he had always intensely desired, but to which, as he had then long guessed, and as he is now quite certain, no human paths directly lead. He would buy with avidity travels to the moon and to the planets, from the most worthless to the best. He loved Utopias and did not disregard even so prosaic a category as books of real travel, so long as by exaggeration or by a glamour in the style they gave him a full draught of that drug which he desired. Whether this satisfaction the young man sought was a satisfaction in illusion (I have used the word 'drug' with hesitation), or whether it was, as he persistently maintained, the satisfaction of a memory, or whether it was, as I am often tempted to



think, the satisfaction of a thirst which will ultimately be quenched in every human soul I cannot tell. Whatever it was, he sought it with more than the appetite with which a hungry man seeks food. He sought it with something that was not hunger but passion.

That evening he found a book.

It is well known that men purchase with difficulty second-hand books upon the stalls, and that in some mysterious way the sellers of these books are content to provide a kind of library for the poorer and more eager of the public, and a library admirable in this, that it is accessible upon every shelf and exposes a man to no control, except that he must not steal, and even in this it is nothing but the force of public law that interferes. My friend therefore would in the natural course of things have dipped into the book and left it there; but a better luck persuaded him. Whether it was the beginning of the rain or a sudden loneliness in such terrible weather and in such a terrible town, compelling him to seek a more permanent companionship with another mind, or whether it was my sudden arrival and shame lest his poverty should appear in his refusing to buy the book—whatever it was, he bought that same. And since he bought the Book I also have known it and have found in it, as he did, the most complete expression that I know of the Unknown Country, of which he was a citizen—oddly a citizen, as I then thought, wisely as I now conceive.

All that can best be expressed in words should be expressed in verse, but verse is a slow thing to create; nay, it is not really created: it is a secretion of the mind, it is a pearl that gathers round some irritant and slowly expresses the very essence of beauty and of desire that has lain long, potential and unexpressed, in the mind of the man who secretes it. God knows that this Unknown Country has been hit off in verse a hundred times. If I were perfectly sure of my accents I would quote two lines from the *Odyssey*



in which the Unknown Country stands out as clear as does a sudden vision from a mountain ridge when the mist lifts after a long climb and one sees beneath one an unexpected and glorious land; such a vision as greets a man when he comes over the Saldeu into the simple and secluded Republic of the Andorrans. Then, again, the Germans in their idioms have flashed it out, I am assured, for I remember a woman telling me that there was a song by Schiller which exactly gave the revelation of which I speak. In English, thank Heaven, emotion of this kind, emotion necessary to the life of the soul, is very abundantly furnished. As, who does not know the lines:

Blessed with that which is not in the word  
Of man nor his conception: Blessed Land!

Then there is also the whole group of glimpses which Shakespeare amused himself by scattering as might a man who had a great oak-chest full of jewels and who now and then, out of kindly fun, poured out a handful and gave them to his guests. I quote from memory, but I think certain of the lines run more or less like this:

Look how the dawn in russet mantle clad  
Stands on the steep of yon high eastern hill.

And again:

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

Which moves me to digress. . . . How on earth did any living man pull it off as well as that? I remember arguing with a man who very genuinely thought the talent of Shakespeare was exaggerated in public opinion, and discovering at the end of a long wrangle that he was not considering Shakespeare as a poet. But as a poet, then, how on earth did he manage it?



Keats did it continually, especially in the *Hyperion*. Milton does it so well in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost* that I defy any man of a sane understanding to read the whole of that book before going to bed and not to wake up next morning as though he had been on a journey. William Morris does it, especially in the verses about a prayer over the corn; and as for Virgil, the poet Virgil, he does it continually like a man whose very trade it is. Who does not remember the swimmer who saw Italy from the top of the wave?

Here also let me digress. How do the poets do it? (I do not mean where do they get their power, as I was asking just now of Shakespeare, but how do the words, simple or complex, produce that effect?) Very often there is not any adjective, sometimes not any qualification at all: often only one subject with its predicate and its statement and its object. There is never any detail of description, but the scene rises, more vivid in colour, more exact in outline, more wonderful in influence, than anything we can see with our eyes, except perhaps those things we see in the few moments of intense emotion which come to us, we know not whence, and expand out into completion and into manhood.

Catullus does it. He does it so powerfully in the opening line of

*Vesper adest . . .*

that a man reads the first couplet of that Hymeneal, and immediately perceives the Apennines.

The nameless translator of the Highland song does it, especially when he advances that battering line:

And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

They all do it, bless their hearts, the poets, which leads me back again to the mournful reflection that it cannot be done in prose. . . .

Little friends, my readers, I wish it could be done in



prose, for if it could, and if I knew how to do it, I would here present to you that Unknown Country in such a fashion that every landscape which you should see henceforth would be transformed, by the appearing through it, the shining and uplifting through it, of the Unknown Country upon which reposes this tedious and repetitive world.

Now you may say to me that prose can do it, and you may quote to me the end of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, a very remarkable piece of writing. Or, better still, as we shall be more agreed upon it, the general impression left upon the mind by the book which set me writing—Mr. Hudson's *Crystal Age*. I do not deny that prose can do it, but when it does it, it is hardly to be called prose, for it is inspired. Note carefully the passages in which the trick is worked in prose (for instance, in the story of Ruth in the Bible, where it is done with complete success), you will perceive an incantation and a spell. Indeed this same episode of Ruth in exile has inspired two splendid passages of European verse, of which it is difficult to say which is the more national, and therefore the greatest, Victor Hugo's in the *Légende des Siècles* or Keats's astounding four lines.

There was a shepherd the other day up at Findon Fair who had come from the east by Lewes with sheep, and who had in his eyes that reminiscence of horizons which makes the eyes of shepherds and of mountaineers different from the eyes of other men. He was occupied when I came upon him in pulling Mr. Fulton's sheep by one hind leg so that they should go the way they were desired to go. It happened that day that Mr. Fulton's sheep were not sold, and the shepherd went driving them back through Findon Village, and up on to the high Downs. I went with him to hear what he had to say, for shepherds talk quite differently from other men. And when we came on to the shoulder of Chanctonbury and looked down upon the Weald, which stretched



out like the Plains of Heaven, he said to me: 'I never come here but it seems like a different place down below, and as though it were not the place where I have gone afoot with sheep under the hills. It seems different when you are looking down at it.' He added that he had never known why. Then I knew that he, like myself, was perpetually in perception of the Unknown Country, and I was very pleased. But we did not say anything more to each other about it until we got down into Steyning. There we drank together and we still said nothing more about it, so that to this day all we know of the matter is what we knew when we started, and what you knew when I began to write this, and what you are now no further informed upon, namely, that there is an Unknown Country lying beneath the places that we know, and appearing only in moments of revelation.

Whether we shall reach this country at last or whether we shall not, it is impossible to determine.

## On the Air of the Dordogne    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

ALL countries are built in vast inclined planes which lean up against one another and have ridges between. The great rivers run in the hollows where these planes meet at their lowest, and the watersheds are the lines along which their top edges come together—and there, you might think, was the end of it: but there is much more.

You must not only say: 'I have left the valley of the Thames, I have found the valley of the Itchen', nor only: 'I have come over St. Leonards Forest; I am no longer among the Surrey rivers, I am on the headwaters of the Sussex Weald', nor only: 'I have left the great fields of the Yonne and the Seine and I have come down on to the Plain of Burgundy and the Eastern Rivers'—it is much more than that.

The slope that looks northward is one thing, the slope that looks southward another. The slope that has been conquered or ordered by the foreigner, or civilized from without, or in any way rearranged, may march with, but will contrast violently against, the slope that has been protected or isolated or left desert.

The very storms of Nature treat one and the other differently; the rivers do a different work according to the treatment of forests by men within their watershed; the soil sometimes, the air always, changes. Above all, the houses of men change.

The accent of speech changes, if not the form of speech; nay, in the transition from one such region to another I can believe that the daylight seems to change.

All those subtle, permanent, and masterly things which we cannot measure, but which are infinitely important compared with what we can measure, are grouped in groups in



those great depressions which look to one sea or to one city, and the regions of Europe and its patriotisms run ultimately with the valleys. So it is with the Loire, and the Dordogne.

Whatever feeds the Loire is one. There are large uncultivated heaths the size of a country; there are very quiet pastures, very rich and silent, stretching for a hundred miles and as broad as a man would care to walk in a day; and in the highlands of the watershed there are rocks, and the trees of rocks, and at last sterile and savage mountains. And the upper courses of all the rivers of the Loire are torrents foaming in glens. Nevertheless, whatever feeds the Loire has a unity. The Allier, the Vienne, the Creuse, the Loire itself (which is only one stream out of many) are bound together.

Well, you go up into the sources of the watershed, you cross a confused land of rounded hills and knobs of crested rock and short, sturdy, sparse wood and heather and broom, and at last you see at your feet, trickling southward, not northwards, a stream that knows its way. And this at last, when it has worked its way through little waterfalls and past the gates it knows, will be the River Isle. If you knew it only from the map you would think it a stream like any other stream, but when you go downwards with it upon your feet, and when you see it with your eyes, tumbling and hurrying there, you know that everything has changed—you are in the air of the Dordogne.

There is a louder noise in the village streets; the habit of summer clings to them late into the winter time and re-arises in them early with the spring—though the cold is sharp in all the hills of the Limousin, whether to the north or to the south of that watershed, yet the south of it has a tradition very different from the north, and the sun is more kind or more worshipped. Here are lodges built beside or over the humblest houses; the vine is not so disciplined; it has a simpler and a more natural growth, it is an ornament and



a shade. The churches have flat roofs such as Italy and Spain will use. Their Gothic is an attempt, their Romanesque is native.

The children and the birds are careless. Wealth is not spent in luxury but in externals, and poverty is contented. All this is the air of the Dordogne.

You feel what you have come to when you drink your first cup of wine on the southward slope of the hill, for the wine of every country is the soul of it. No Romans taught these men to plant the vine, it was surely native here. Here the vine grudges nothing; the god who inhabits it is not here a guest or a prisoner. Its juice is full and admirable. It needs no age. In Burgundy, where an iron works in the earth, they need nine years to breed perfection in their wine, but here, in the air of the Dordogne, though so far south, they need not seven. Within twelve months of the vintage a stranger can hardly tell its age, and for my part I would drink it gladly in November with the people there.

God forbid that anyone should blaspheme the wines of the Loire, the cherished and difficult vineyards of Touraine. Great care and many friends protect them, and an infinite labour brings them to maturity. The wine of Chinon, which made Rabelais, the wine of Vouvray, which is good for the studying of mathematics, the wine of Saumur, which teaches men how to leap horses over gates—all these wines are of the north, and yet it would be treason to malign them.

I will not be tempted to such a treason, but could I be tempted I should be tempted by the generous invitation which, when one comes down the southward slope and feels the air of the Dordogne, proceeds and gathers from the vineyards of that delightful land. You may have seen on bottles the word 'St. Emilion', and if what was within was from St. Emilion indeed, then you saw a great name upon the label; for you must know that St. Emilion is built in a sacred hollow. There Guadet, 'who could not forgive', was



born. Thence the noblest blood of the Revolution proceeded. In its vineyards died by their own hand the best of the Republicans, and this place still keeps, as in a kind of chalice, the spirit of the Gironde. If you doubt it, drink the wine. And St. Emilion is, as it were, the centre and navel of the country of the Dordogne. Here there stands or stood a church built all out of one rock. St. Martin, or some such person, beginning the monastic habit, was pestered (I have heard) by the grand nobles whom he had persuaded to monkishness in a fit of piety, for they said: 'This life of yours is all very well, but what is there to do?'

Then St. Martin, lifting up his eyes, saw a large rock, and said to the youngest of them:

'Here is a great rock. Hack it about and chisel it until it has the shape of a church outside, and then cut doors and windows and hack away into it until it has the shape of a church inside, and you will have plenty to do.'

The story as it was told to me goes on to say that they lived to be so old and so very old at their labour that they saw Charlemagne go riding by before the first Mass was sung in that rock church; and that that great soldier, coming in to their first Mass, thought the workers in their extreme old age to be the spirits of another world.

Now the church of St. Emilion is a symbol of the air of the Dordogne on account of its strength, its homogeneity, its legend, and its virtue of delicate but profound age.

You have drunk Barsac—and in so drinking you drank (you thought) April woods and the first flowers. Barsac would not be Barsac but for the Dordogne, which helps to make the great Gironde. And you have drunk Entremes, which is the name for a host of wines, but the kernel of the whole thing is the full blood that dreams and ripens, and as it were procreates, where the slope of the Dordogne is most the Dordogne, although the Dordogne is not there: at St. Emilion.

The pen has the power to describe, not general, but particular things. Though it may define what is general, it can call up only what is particular, and in that extended province which is ruled by the Dordogne St. Emilion has moved me to a particular description.



## On Dropping Anchor



THE best noise in all the world is the rattle of the anchor chain when one comes into harbour at last and lets it go over the bows.

You may say that one does nothing of the sort, that one picks up moorings, and that letting go so heavy a thing as an anchor is no business for you and me. If you say that you are wrong. Men go from inhabited place to inhabited place, and for pleasure from station to station, then pick up moorings as best they can, usually craning over the side and grabbing as they pass, and cursing the man astern for leaving such way on her and for passing so wide. Yes, I know that. You are not the only man who has picked up moorings. Not by many many thousands. Many moorings have I picked up in many places, none without some sort of misfortune; therefore do I still prefer the rattle of the anchor chain.

Once—to be accurate, seventeen years ago—I had been out all night by myself in a boat called the *Silver Star*. She was a very small boat. She had only one sail; she was black inside and out, and I think about one hundred years old. I had hired her of a poor man, and she was his only possession.

It was a rough night in the late summer when the rich are compelled in their detestable grind to go to the Solent. When I say it was night I mean it was the early morning, just late enough for the rich to be asleep aboard their boats, and the dawn was silent upon the sea. There was a strong tide running up the Medina. I was tired to death. I had passed the Royal Yacht Squadron grounds, and the first thing I saw was a very fine and noble buoy—new-painted, gay, lordly—moorings worthy of a man!



I let go the halyard very briskly, and I nipped forward and got my hand upon that great buoy—there was no hauling of it inboard; I took the little painter of my boat and made it fast to this noble buoy, and then immediately I fell asleep. In this sleep of mine I heard, as in a pleasant dream, the exact motion of many oars rowed by strong men, and very soon afterwards I heard a voice with a Colonial accent swearing in an abominable manner, and I woke up and looked—and there was a man of prodigious wealth, all dressed in white, and with an extremely new cap on his head. His whiskers also were white and his face bright red, and he was in a great passion. He was evidently the owner or master of the buoy, and on either side of the fine boat in which he rowed were the rowers, his slaves. He could not conceive why I had tied the *Silver Star* to his magnificent great imperial moorings, to which he had decided to tie his own expensive ship, on which, no doubt, a dozen as rich as himself were sailing the seas.

I told him that I was sorry I had picked up his moorings, but that, in this country, it was the common courtesy of the sea to pick up any spare moorings one could find. I also asked him the name of his expensive ship, but he only answered with curses. I told him the name of my ship was the *Silver Star*.

Then, when I had cast off, I put out the sweeps and I rowed gently, for it was now slack water at the top of the tide, and I stood by while he tied his magnificent yacht to the moorings. When he had done that I rowed under the stern of that ship and read her name. But I will not print it here, only let me tell you it was the name of a ship belonging to a fabulously rich man. Riches, I thought then and I think still, corrupt the heart.

Upon another occasion I came with one companion across the bar of Orford River, out of a very heavy wind outside and a very heavy sea. I just touched as I crossed that bar,



though I was on the top of the highest tide of the year, for it was just this time in September, the highest springs of the hunter's moon.

My companion and I sailed up Orford River, and when we came to Orford Town we saw a buoy, and I said to my companion, 'Let us pick up moorings.'

Upon the bank of the river was a long line of men, all shouting and howling, and warning us not to touch that buoy. But we called out to them that we meant no harm. We only meant to pick up those moorings for a moment, so as to make everything snug on board, and that then we would take a line ashore and lie close to the wharf. Only the more did those numerous men (whom many others ran up to join as I called) forbid us with oaths to touch the buoy. Nevertheless, we picked up the little buoy (which was quite small and light) and we got it in-board, and held on, waiting for our boat to swing to it. But an astonishing thing happened! The boat paid no attention to the moorings, but went careering up river carrying the buoy with it, and apparently dragging the moorings along the bottom without the least difficulty. And this was no wonder, for we found out afterwards that the little buoy had only been set there to mark a racing point, and that the weights holding the line of it to the bottom were very light and few. So it was no wonder the men of Orford had been so angry. Soon it was dark, and we replaced the buoy stealthily, and when we came in to eat at the inn we were not recognized.

It was on this occasion that was written the song:

The men that lived in Orford stood  
Upon the shore to meet me;  
Their faces were like carven wood,  
They did not wish to greet me.  
etc.

It has eighteen verses.



I say again, unless you have moorings of your own—an extravagant habit—picking up moorings is always a perilous and doubtful thing, fraught with accident and hatred and mischance. Give me the rattle of the anchor chain!

I love to consider a place which I have never yet seen, but which I shall reach at last, full of repose and marking the end of those voyages, and security from the tumble of the sea.

This place will be a cove set round with high hills on which there shall be no house or sign of men, and it shall be enfolded by quite deserted land; but the westering sun will shine pleasantly upon it under a warm air. It will be a proper place for sleep.

The fairway into that haven shall lie behind a pleasant little beach of shingle, which shall run out aslant into the sea from the steep hill-side, and shall be a breakwater made by God. The tide shall run up behind it smoothly, and in a silent way, filling the quiet hollow of the hills, brimming it all up like a cup—a cup of refreshment and of quiet, a cup of ending.

Then with what pleasure shall I put my small boat round, just round the point of that shingle beach, noting the shoal water by the eddies and the deeps by the blue colour of them where the channel runs from the main into the fairway. Up that fairway shall I go, up into the cove, and the gates of it shall shut behind me, headland against headland, so that I shall not see the open sea any more, though I shall still hear its distant noise. But all around me, save for that distant echo of the surf from the high hills, will be silence; and the evening will be gathering already.

Under that falling light, all alone in such a place, I shall let go the anchor chain, and let it rattle for the last time. My anchor will go down into the clear salt water with a



run, and when it touches I shall pay out four lengths or more so that she may swing easily and not drag, and then I shall tie up my canvas and fasten all for the night, and get me ready for sleep. And that will be the end of my sailing.



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